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**REPORT FROM SIGAR: CHALLENGES TO
SECURING AFGHAN WOMEN'S GAINS IN
A POST-2014 ENVIRONMENT**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
AND INVESTIGATIONS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
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REPORT FROM SIGAR: CHALLENGES TO SECURING AFGHAN WOMEN'S GAINS IN A POST-2014 ENVIRONMENT

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS,
Washington, DC, Tuesday, October 29, 2013.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 1:00 p.m., in room 2212, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Martha Roby (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MARTHA ROBY, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM ALABAMA, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

Mrs. ROBY. Welcome to this afternoon's oversight hearing. Before we begin, I would like to take a moment to note the passing of our former Chairman, Representative Ike Skelton. Although I have never served with Mr. Skelton, I know he represented the best of this committee and never forgot the importance of putting the needs of our men and women in uniform first. Our thoughts are with his family and his friends and his colleagues.

Today we will convene a hearing with the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction and two outside experts. We will receive testimony on the challenges of ensuring the important security, educational, and economic gains that Afghan women have made in the recent years are not lost as the United States transitions its force posture in 2014.

This subcommittee convened a related hearing in April. At that time we received testimony emphasizing that it is essential that Afghanistan develop a lasting and functioning government with capable police and military forces. A safe and secure Afghanistan is a necessary predicate to ensuring that all are protected, men and women.

Members of this subcommittee are deeply committed to this topic. In May, I traveled to Afghanistan for the third time. It was my second CODEL [congressional delegation] that I led, and I was joined by Ms. Tsongas, Ms. Duckworth, and several others. And our agenda focused on not only visiting with our men and women in uniform to thank them for their service in theater, but also to focus on women's issues.

We saw firsthand women and girls who were attending schools and universities, holding elected office, joining the military and police forces, and pursuing new opportunities previously denied to them. These are important gains that must not disappear once the U.S. reduces forces in Afghanistan, and we must closely monitor conditions during this critical transition.

The safety and security of Afghan women remains an important barometer. You have heard me say it many times. It is a litmus test for the success of our efforts. Before proceeding, let me note that members of other subcommittees may intend to join us, and therefore I ask unanimous consent that non-subcommittee members be allowed to participate in today's hearing after all Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee members have had an opportunity to ask questions. Is there objection? Without objection, non-subcommittee members will be recognized at the appropriate time for 5 minutes.

Now I turn to my distinguished Ranking Member for her introductory remarks.

[The prepared statement of Mrs. Roby can be found in the Appendix on page 31.]

STATEMENT OF HON. NIKI TSONGAS, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM MASSACHUSETTS, RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

Ms. TSONGAS. Thank you, Chairwoman Roby. I, too, also would like to acknowledge the passing of Chairman Skelton. I did have the good fortune to serve under him for a number of years, and I found him to be a remarkably decent and honorable man, always of great integrity. He served our country, his district, and this committee, I think, with great distinction and we are grateful for his service to our country, but we miss—we are sorry he passed away. I would also like to thank you, Chairwoman Roby, for working to arrange this hearing today. I believe, as do you, that this is a vital opportunity to build on the important and bipartisan discussions on those issues which our subcommittee—those issues which our subcommittee had a chance to visit in an April hearing on Afghan women in the ANSF [Afghan National Security Forces], and in our July closed briefing with Mr. Sopko.

As you noted, our Mother's Day CODELs to Afghanistan—as a result of them, we have witnessed firsthand the significant gains that Afghan women have made over the past decade in areas such as health, governance, and education. Both of us saw what was at stake as our forces continue to draw down, and so I would also like to thank all of our witnesses for being here today, each with your own valuable perspective. I would also particularly like to thank you, Mr. Sopko, for the long-term commitment you have made to prioritize oversight over Afghan's women's issues. Your office faces an enormous array of challenges in Afghanistan, and is responsible, as we know, for monitoring every aspect of our reconstruction efforts under logistically frustrating circumstances.

I was very encouraged by your recently announced comprehensive audit of our programs for Afghan women and girls due out early next year. And from the written testimonies of all our guests today, it is apparent that each of you is fundamentally in agreement that while there have been precious gains made for Afghan women and girls over the past decade, these gains are already threatened and will face significant challenges after the bulk of our armed forces have withdrawn at the end of 2014.

Your testimony, Mr. Sopko, also notes the significant obstacles SIGAR [Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction]

and other Federal agencies will face in performing oversight on the ground, due to security challenges. As much as 80 percent of the country may simply be inaccessible. After 2014, not only may the gains which have been made for women be eroded in these areas, it is also likely that we may not even know the full extent of the setbacks.

I also look forward to hearing from each of your thoughts on how we can improve recruiting and retention of Afghan women in the ANSF and Afghan national police. The issue is increasingly timely due to a number of second-order effects of low recruitment, such as the approaching presidential elections in April, and the inability of Afghan women wishing to cast ballots to do so, unless there are adequate women in uniform available to search them. The ANSF is not meeting its recruiting objectives, and the obstacles are varied and significant.

So thank you all again for being here this afternoon, and I look forward to your testimony.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Tsongas can be found in the Appendix on page 33.]

Mrs. ROBY. Thank you, Ms. Tsongas. Our panel today includes Mr. John Sopko, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction; Ms. Michelle Barsa, senior manager for policy at Inclusive Security Action; and Dr. Kenneth Katzman, a specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs at the Congressional Research Service. Mr. Sopko, please begin.

STATEMENT OF JOHN F. SOPKO, SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION, OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION

Mr. SOPKO. Thank you, very much. Chairman Roby, Ranking Member Tsongas, members of the committee, it is a pleasure to be here today to discuss SIGAR's oversight work and the challenges facing Afghan women and girls. Since 2002, Congress has appropriated nearly \$100 billion to rebuild Afghanistan, making it the most expensive effort to rebuild a single nation in U.S. history.

Improving the lives of Afghan women and girls has been an integral component of that effort. From 2003 through 2010, Congress dedicated \$630 million to address the needs of Afghan women and girls, and it appears this investment may have paid off. Over the last decade, Afghanistan has made significant progress in advancing the rights of Afghan women and girls, providing them with critical services and protecting them from violence.

However, despite these initial gains, Afghan women still remain largely marginalized. The United Nations Gender Inequality Index puts Afghanistan near the bottom, ranking 175 of 186. The United Nations also reports that 50 percent of all marriages that take place in Afghanistan are still child marriages.

And while the goal is for the women to make up 10 percent of the Afghan National Army and Air Force, as you know, they currently make up .3 percent of those forces. And, unfortunately, the results for recruiting women into the Afghan National Police are equally abysmal, less than 1 percent.

Due to interest from Congress, including members of this committee, SIGAR initiated the new audit referenced by Ranking Member Tsongas. We will try to identify the challenges and evaluate the U.S. efforts to confront them. SIGAR is also concerned about the impact of the coalition troop drawdown on our government's ability to oversee Afghan National Security Forces which, for the most part, will be solely responsible for preserving these hard-fought gains for Afghan women and girls after 2014.

Now although it is difficult to predict the future U.S. presence in Afghanistan, it is likely that less than a quarter of the country, mostly the areas around the major cities, will be accessible to U.S. civilian personnel by the end of the transition, and a significant decrease from 2009.

The maps which we are showing up on the TV illustrate that fact. They also clearly show the trend of a limited future oversight access after 2014. In the coming year, SIGAR will continue to focus attention on how the military drawdown, the decline in donor resources, and the transition to Afghan governance and responsibility for the ANSF will affect reconstruction and the rights of women and girls.

[The maps referred to can be found in the Appendix beginning on page 71.]

Mr. SPOKO. Now in addition to our work on Afghan women and girls, SIGAR has a large body of work focused on the Afghan National Security Forces which is relevant to today's hearing. This quarter, SIGAR issued a number of new audits and inspections related to the ANSF. These reports underscore some key problems that SIGAR has identified before, including providing direct assistance to the Afghan government without fully assessing and or monitoring and or fixing financial management weaknesses; the lack of an ANSF basing plan that takes into account future ANSF numbers; ignoring the Afghan's inability to sustain programs and infrastructure; the absence of strong accountability measures over supplies provided to the ANSF; and the failure to consistently exercise strong contract oversight and management.

In conclusion, the reconstruction effort is undergoing a massive transition. This includes a growing reliance on direct or on-budget assistance to the Afghan ministries. Now I just returned from Brussels where I met with officials of the European Union [EU] and NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization]. These meetings confirmed our concerns. As you may know, as it was recently reported, that NATO was planning to focus less on training of Afghan troops and more on overseeing how the funding will be spent, due to fears of corruption and misuse of NATO funds. I also learned that the European Union does not give direct bilateral assistance to specific Afghan ministries because of the risk of threat and abuse.

This comports with concerns expressed to me by DFID [Department for International Development], the EU—I mean, excuse me, the U.K. aid agency early in the year.

In addition, we were told in Brussels that the EU has serious misgivings that the Law and Order Trust Fund [for Afghanistan] or LOTFA, has inadequate controls to ensure payments are not made to ghost Afghan employees.

Therefore, I conclude by saying the United States and other donors must establish mechanisms to protect direct assistance from corruption. And the U.S. and its allies must have the courage to condition assistance on the Afghans meeting their commitments, whether on oversight or protecting the rights of women and girls.

Thank you very much. And I look forward to your questioning.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sopko can be found in the Appendix on page 35.]

Mrs. ROBY. Thank you.

Ms. Barsa.

**STATEMENT OF MICHELLE BARSA, SENIOR MANAGER FOR
POLICY, INCLUSIVE SECURITY ACTION**

Ms. BARSA. Chairman Roby, Ranking Member Tsongas, members of the subcommittee, allow me to thank you for your consistent support for Afghan women and for inviting me here to testify today on the issue of recruitment and retention of women in the Afghan National Security Forces.

I work with an organization called Inclusive Security, that is dedicated to increasing the inclusion of women in peace and security processes.

We have been in Afghanistan for over a decade, and I travel to the country frequently. Informing this testimony are consultations I have led with men and women in the Afghan National Security Forces, officials of the Afghan Ministries of Interior and Defense, and representatives of ISAF [International Security Assistance Force], among others.

Let me start by acknowledging that the gains Afghan women have made since 2001 are many. But, as U.S. and coalition forces draw down, progress is beginning to erode.

As we consider how to maintain progress for women, we must evaluate women's direct participation in the Afghan institutions mandated to protect those gains.

In total, the U.S. has appropriated about \$52.8 billion for the Afghan security forces funds for supporting the Afghan national forces. Prior to 2013, there had never been authorizing or appropriating language in law that specifically addressed recruitment and retention of women in those forces.

The presence or absence of women in the ANSF has implications in the areas the U.S. has deemed top priorities, including, but not limited to, democracy promotion, countering terrorism, and providing security to the Afghan people.

And I will elaborate briefly on those three points.

On the issue of democracy promotion, female security officers are required to staff the women-only voter registration and polling stations. In the absence of sufficient numbers of female security personnel, these voter registration and polling stations will remain closed.

In other words, Afghan women will not be allowed to vote.

On countering terrorism, last year in Afghanistan, you can trace at least 13 recorded accounts of male insurgents dressed as women infiltrating restricted areas from which they launched attacks. There were no female body searchers to stop them.

Due to cultural norms, male security officers cannot conduct body searches of women, security checks of homes that have a female present, nor effectively gather information from or conduct interrogations of women.

On the issue of providing security to the Afghan people, of course, understanding people to refer equally to men, women, boys and girls, sexual and gender-based violence is endemic in Afghanistan, with as many as 87 percent of women experiencing some form of domestic abuse or forced marriage in their lifetime.

In cases where women report these crimes to male police, they are often blamed for the abuse or, worse, abused by the officer.

With female police officers, these crimes are more likely to be properly registered, investigated and prosecuted.

Of the myriad institutional and social impediments to recruitment and retention in the Afghan security forces, I will highlight six of priority concern to women.

First, the recruitment process. Women have reported recruitment officers turning them away, heckling them as bad women and asking for sexual favors in exchange for enrollment.

Second, assignment and rank promotion. Women have often reported being assigned to positions below their ranks, including soldiers relegated to carrying out menial tasks, such as cleaning the office or serving tea.

Equipment and transportation is an issue. Women have reported not being assigned weapons, never receiving uniforms or being issued uniforms made for men, and having rare access to vehicles, which limits their ability to investigate crimes, respond to ongoing incidents, and conduct outreach to communities.

Three is the issue of sexual harassment. Complaints of sexual harassment, abuse and coercion are widespread throughout the forces. The existing complaints response mechanism has proven ineffective in addressing abuse and holding perpetrators accountable.

Then, there is the public perceptions issue. While surveys do actually show that communities are increasingly supportive of police women, families are still reluctant to encourage or allow female members to serve. This is partially attributable to conservative cultural norms, but also to the rampant sexual harassment and assault within the forces and lack of female-only facilities, which lead to rumors of prostitution and un-Islamic behavior.

Highlighting the point of inadequate facilities, as one example, 29 of the 30 police training centers do not have dormitories for women. Without appropriate facilities, women trainees need to travel home each night, which effectively limits enrollment to women in the immediate vicinity of the training center.

The Afghan government has set ambitious targets for recruiting and retaining women in the forces, but we are not on track to meet them.

This is, in part, attributable to the environment, but also to an under-resourced effort. We are grateful Congress has taken steps to address this. The 2013 NDAA [National Defense Authorization Act] emphasizes the importance of recruitment and retention of women in the forces. The House version of the 2014 NDAA as well as the 2014 defense approps [appropriations] bill specifically au-

thorize and appropriate, respectively, \$47.3 million for this purpose.

Efforts to support women in the Afghan forces will be sidelined if money is not explicitly reserved, which, to clarify, doesn't imply adding another line of effort to the train and assist mission.

To effectively integrate women into the forces, interventions designed to recruit and retain women must be integrated into current U.S. efforts under the existing funding categories.

I want to stress the point that right now the focus needs to be on cultivating a safe environment for women within the forces, which can only be done by taking on the challenges outlined earlier.

Additionally, financial resources must be complemented by human resources. Right now, we have gender advisers in place at ISAF HQ [International Security Assistance Force Headquarters], ISAF Joint Command and the NATO training mission. A number of these positions will be cut by the start of 2014, which will curtail our ability to meaningfully make progress toward the goals set.

Without question, Afghan women have experienced improvements in access to health care, education, economic opportunity and political power since the fall of the Taliban in 2001.

But it is important to remember, they weren't handed progress; they fought for it. They established social services organizations, ran for political office, advocated to official actors, and did the impossible work of holding communities together in the midst of war.

As we question how to maintain gains post-2014, our answers must include enabling women themselves to protect what they have fought so hard to achieve. We must acknowledge Afghan women's interest in serving their communities and their country.

And, for those who want to serve in the armed forces, it is our obligation to ensure they can.

Thank you, and I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Barsa can be found in the Appendix on page 50.]

Mrs. ROBY. Thank you very much.

Mr. Katzman.

STATEMENT OF DR. KENNETH KATZMAN, SPECIALIST IN MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS, CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE

Dr. KATZMAN. Thank you very much, Chairman Roby and Ranking Member Tsongas for—

Mrs. ROBY. Dr. Katzman, sorry.

Dr. KATZMAN. Thank you very much for asking the Congressional Research Service for my testimony. I will summarize it and ask the full text be included in the record.

My work on Afghanistan for the Congressional Research Service focuses extensively on Afghan politics, culture and the human rights situation, having studied Afghanistan since the Soviet era.

My testimony lays out some of the gains and some of the setbacks, actually, that women have made in Afghanistan since 2001.

There have been dramatic gains, as outlined, but also, since the Taliban insurgency gained or regained some strength, toward 2006,

2007, before President Obama's surge in Afghanistan, there have been setbacks.

As the Taliban make gains, they tend to enforce their way of thinking in the areas under their control.

What I want to do in my summary is just lay out four scenarios for post-2014 and how that would affect women's rights in Afghanistan.

The first scenario is relative stability. In other words, postulating that it appears that, roughly, the United States might keep about 10,000 troops in Afghanistan after 2014, with about another 5,000 partner country forces.

Most of my peers in this business, we agree that that probably is reasonably enough to preserve a status quo. The government in Kabul will not collapse under that scenario and will continue to even accomplish some economic development.

Most of these forces will be training and mentoring the 350,000 member ANSF.

So if the security situation—if, indeed, the security gains hold, roughly, then women's rights will relatively remain as they are—steps forward, steps backward; gains, some setbacks, but not a dramatic decline.

The second scenario is what I call a worst-case scenario, which would be a collapse of the government in Kabul. If, for example, there is no agreement to keep U.S. troops or if the international troops prove insufficient, and the Afghan security forces collapse under Taliban pressure, and the Taliban were, perhaps, to recapture control of Afghanistan or much of Afghanistan, that clearly I think would represent a worst-case scenario.

We could expect that even though some Taliban leaders, including Mullah Omar, have suggested that they may be more open to a different type of regime, should they come back to power, not necessarily expelling girls from school, not necessarily preventing women working outside the home. I think we have to assume that if the Taliban were to come back to power, they would enforce some of those restrictions, many of those restrictions that they practiced when they were in power from 1996 to 2001, which included using the soccer stadium as an arena to stone women to death and conduct public executions. And women in the streets who were not completely covered were routinely hit. And it was—well, we don't need to go—it was awful. You know, there is no other way to describe it.

The most likely scenario I see is this third scenario, where I say the influence of what I call faction leaders is going to increase after 2014. The U.S. and partners will have not that many forces in Afghanistan. These faction leaders probably will reassert themselves. They already are starting to call some of their former militia men back into service.

Most of them are Islamic—very, very conservative Islamists. Ismail Khan, for example, who used to run western Afghanistan; there was a faction leader in Helmand, Sher Mohammad Akhunzadeh, very, very repressive, conservative on women.

Some of them, such as Mr. Dostum [Abdul Rashid Dostum] in the north, the Uzbek area, he is actually somewhat more progressive. He is a former communist.

But the bottom line is, the faction leaders would have increased influence in post-2014, and they tend to enforce arbitrary rule. Rule of law will basically dissolve. They rule by the barrel of the gun, the, what I call in the testimony, the mujahideen culture, the culture of we fought the Soviets, we fought the Taliban, therefore, we are in charge, and you do what we say.

Again, not a good scenario for women; but, you know, not as bad as the Taliban coming back.

A middle-ground scenario would be, as I say in the last one, a settlement with the Taliban, if there is a political settlement. Karzai or his successor has a settlement with the Taliban. The Taliban come back into the government peacefully, perhaps as ministers, perhaps controlling provinces or having seats in Parliament. Again, these Talibs who come back would be looking to impose Islamic restrictions, and that would not be a good scenario for women. However, they would not be controlling the government, they would be in partnership with existing progressive forces, and so it is sort of a middle-ground scenario.

So in conclusion, under almost any post-2014 Afghanistan scenario, it is likely that some of the gains we have seen since 2001 will likely be eroded. Some of these gains threaten more than other scenarios, but likely it will not be a positive after 2014.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Katzman can be found in the Appendix on page 60.]

Mrs. ROBY. Thank you very much, and again thank you all for your input and insight into these issues that are so very important to this committee. I am going to start with you, Mr. Sopko. This weekend, there was a Washington Post article that I am sure most everybody here has read, where your organization discussed the difficulty that your auditors are going to have monitoring the U.S.-funded construction projects as the U.S. troop levels reduce over the next 12 months and after 2014.

As you conduct your ongoing work, looking at women's programs specifically over the next year, what sort of approach are you going to take to gather information and provide us better visibility as it relates to women's issues there?

Mr. SOPKO. Chairman Roby, that is a good question, and I will be honest with you, we don't have as good an answer I would like to give you. One of the reasons we sent that letter to the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and AID [Agency for International Development] administrator was to try to glean best practices. We in particular are trying to understand how you can monitor these far-reaching programs and if you look at the bubble map, we have actually put some specific construction projects on, but that doesn't include, and if we did include all of the places where the ANP [Afghan National Police] is working, or the Afghan military are working, that whole map would be red, and remember, we are paying money for their salaries, we are trying to ensure there is recruitment of women in all of those areas. And the difficulty is how do we monitor when U.S. citizens, U.S. citizens working for the government cannot get there?

Mrs. ROBY. Well, right. And so I wanted to bring up at this point and ask you, when we were, our last trip, on Mother's Day, we had

opportunity, and these ladies here as well were all with us when we sat down with the Minister of Defense and had a frank conversation with him about the monies that are supposed to be used for that very purpose. And we had a—I mean, it was a very frank discussion about whether or not he was committed to ensuring that those monies would go to the right place.

He stated verbally, that he was. So, you know, we do have this language that Mrs. Davis proposed that is in the current—the 2014 NDAA that makes sure that that money is used, but I am curious, in your role, have you had an opportunity to interact with the Minister of Defense and had these conversations to make sure that that money is going where it is supposed to go?

Mr. SOPKO. Madam Chairman, I have not had any conversation with the Minister of Defense, and in particular, I have avoided conversations at that level because of the political overtones, especially since many of the ministers are now running for president, so I don't want to be shown showing favorites, or not showing favorites.

But we have reached out to officials in the ministries at a lower level to try to make a determination. And again, I think the thing you have to keep in mind is, and I use President Reagan's oft-used statement, "trust but verify," and I know my colleague, Dr. Katzman, who has looked at this since the Soviet Union, will remember that in the Soviet Union, they had a better Constitution than we did, so on paper it looked great in the Soviet Union, and these promises are one thing. I think what we need to do is we have to go out and verify, and that is why—

Mrs. ROBY. Sure.

Mr. SOPKO [continuing]. We are concerned about our ability to go out and see those sites and actually kick the tires.

Mrs. ROBY. Well that is the—these maps are very, very telling, so I can appreciate that. And so when you talk about reaching these rural areas and, can you just expand on, you know, I mean, I know what I have read in the news articles, but expand on what your plan is to reach these rural areas as we move to 2014 and beyond.

Mr. SOPKO. Like everything in Afghanistan, there is no silver bullet, and what we are going to have to do is use multiple approaches to this. You can use geospatial, which are satellite photos that you are well aware of, but they have limitations. You can use third-party monitors, and we have actually had experience auditing third-party monitors. And some have been very good. Others have been very bad, and actually we did an audit of a USAID [United States Agency for International Development] program and the third-party monitors couldn't get out and do the monitoring.

Mrs. ROBY. Because they would be—the attention would be drawn to them.

Mr. SOPKO. Absolutely.

Mrs. ROBY. I mean, I think the Washington Post article alluded to this, saying if there is some, you know, Afghan individual out with a notepad and a camera, then clearly they are tied to Western money and they would be threatened themselves.

Mr. SOPKO. Absolutely. How long is he or she going to last out in the countryside? And again, 70 percent of the population is in rural areas.

Mrs. ROBY. Right.

Mr. SOPKO. Which means it is probably going to be outside those bubbles.

Mrs. ROBY. Right, and we—real quick, and then I will yield to Ms. Tsongas, but when we experienced that in our last trip, compared to 2, 3—our first trip 2 years ago, 2½ years ago, where we couldn't move around the country either, and you and I have talked about that. So it is very, very evident that these challenges exist. My time has expired. Ms. Tsongas.

Ms. TSONGAS. Thank you, and thank you all. I think as you can see, our focus and our concern is real, both as a result of all of your testimonies, and understanding how important it is to the long-term stability of the country, that these gains are not bargained away, and that women continue to have ways to meaningfully participate in their country.

And hearing, in an earlier hearing, our April hearing, there was testimony that the ANSF is primarily responsible for recruiting women. And Mr. Sopko, you said in your written testimony that 12,000 women police officers who can conduct body searches on women will be necessary at polling stations so that women are, you know, are allowed to vote in the upcoming elections. But unfortunately, there are currently only about 1,600 women police officers.

And from your testimony, and Ms. Barsa said, this participation is a near-term problem and a long-term problem. In the near term is bulking up the police force so that women can fully participate. The long-term problem is that by participating, they have a stake in governance and the security situation in the country reflects their input.

So the question I have is, what are the levers we can use, if the ANSF is primarily responsible, we are quickly drawing down, how do we incentivize the ANSF to take seriously the need to have women participating to a necessary extent one, so women can participate in the elections in the short-term, and two, for the long-term security of the country, so I will start with you, Ms. Barsa, and then Mr. Sopko, if you would answer.

Ms. BARSA. Sure. It is not the easiest task, but there are a couple things I think you can do. I think one, and Congress has already taken this step, is to dedicate financial resources explicitly to recruitment and retention. And looking beyond just female-targeted recruitment campaigns, but really to the infrastructure and facility refurbishment that the reformist system policies and processes that needs to happen to create a safe environment for women in the forces.

That money needs strong safeguards, so that it is not used for any other purpose, particularly if it is transferred to the Afghan ministries. And we also need to be creative in thinking about how we use this funding as potentially positive incentives, so that the Afghan ministries in theory could get a plus-up in their budget when they meet certain benchmarks related to recruitment and retention, or when we look to money that is dedicated for higher education, secondary or tertiary education for girls, and looking at working out a system like our U.S. program of ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] such that women exchange scholarships to at-

tend these higher institutions in exchange for a service, either the police or army, right?

I think another piece of it is human resources. I mentioned the issue of the advisors. We need these advisors embedded within the ministry. They really force and drive action as well as sitting close to the commanders of ISF HQ, IGC [Inter Governmental Council] and NATO training command, as well as trainers.

So the training capacity doesn't exist internal of the ANA [Afghan National Army] and it is quite weak within the ANP, or the Afghan National Police, and so they are looking externally to international trainers, so they do trainings of trainers for the Afghans to build up that capacity. Diplomatic pressure is really important to bring it up in every key leader engagement, just as you all did in your Mother's Day CODEL. Those gestures carry a lot of weight within the Afghan ministry.

I think as we look to professionalizing the force of reform and revision of the performance evaluation process, such that Afghan officers, particularly those in leadership positions, are evaluated not just on their tactical and operational performance, but on their demonstrated ability to uphold the values of the force. And for leaders, their unit's adherence to a code of conduct that includes zero tolerance for sexual abuse and harassment.

And then finally, I think there is the support for ongoing efforts led by Afghan and international NGOs [non-governmental organizations]. There is a lot of really incredible work happening right now. Consortiums of Afghan women's NGOs that have set up a police mentoring project in the provinces, women are working one on one with police to build their capacity and help them advance complaints when they have them. There are policewomen's associations being formed, and the Afghan Women's Network, a local NGO, is training them in advocacy, bringing them for direct exchanges with chiefs of police. There is work with male commanders, there is community-based democratic policing projects, legal advisors embedded within the ministries who go through accelerated training led by NGOs.

And that money is all currently coming through LOFTA, through the Law and Order Trust Fund, and it is unclear whether those funding levels will be sustained post-2014, so that is another clear avenue.

Ms. TSONGAS. Mr. Sopko, if you have, we have a little time.

Mr. SOPKO. I am usually not into policy. I do process, as I have explained to you before. But I think all of the points raised by my colleague here at the table are accurate. I think we have to look at our own experience, and our own experience with how we integrated our military, how we have promoted women in the ranks, how we did it in the police forces. And there is no silver bullet. I think what my colleague has said has given you a list of about 10 or 15 issues, and I think those are things you have to look at almost every one of them. But the one thing you do have, you have the purse strings.

You have the money that is going to Afghanistan, and it is a lot of money. And I think you have to design a program that incentivizes doing what we, and that means you, and the taxpayer behind you, wants to see done. So there is no silver bullet. But I

will say the one thing which will destroy any of your plans will be if security goes south on the Afghan country, and we don't have effective oversight.

Mrs. ROBY. Mr. Jones.

Mr. JONES. Thank you, Madam Chairman. Mr. Sopko, I have heard you numerous times, and here I am again. I am like any human being. I want to see women and children treated fairly, whether it be America or Afghanistan. My biggest concern is, and I am sure everybody in town will read your report, but you, and maybe those at the table, you have set up metrics of what you think should show that Afghanistan is moving forward. Obviously, they are not making great advances, and there are cultural reasons for that going back 2000 years. It doesn't mean that we still shouldn't try, but in the debt ceiling increase a week ago, \$240 billion for 2½ months, \$30 billion of that goes to Afghanistan.

When do we get to a point as a Congress, and I am talking about both parties, that we set the metrics, but we fall short of the metrics. The American people are sick and tired of the money that we continue to spend and you and other inspector generals testify that you can't account for a large percentage of the American money going to Afghanistan. I don't know, I hope every one of my colleagues knows that we had seven Americans killed during the shutdown. I don't know? That is something I am concerned about. But when do you get to a point, I have been listening for 12 years. I am on the Armed Services Committee as everybody else up here. I have heard, not from you today, I have heard the word, "fragile." We are making progress, but things are fragile. Situations are fragile. I hope that you will continue, those of you at the table, and many people like yourself, to continue to try to put pressure on Congress to look at what we expect, what is reasonable to expect, and what is not reasonable.

Because I cannot explain back to people in my district how we continue to spend \$30 billion in Afghanistan as we raise the debt ceiling, and we are cutting programs left and right across the Third District of North Carolina, even some of the military down in my district. I hope that at some point in time, whether it be you or someone else, would be honest with the Congress and say that just putting money in a black hole and there is no end to the black hole. I assume that the metrics are in here regarding this issue of the women in Afghanistan. I assume you have got recommendations in here, is that correct? I haven't had a chance to look at it.

Mr. SOPKO. Congressman, that is our quarterly report that you held up. You got an advance copy, the committee did. We do discuss some of the metrics. We do not come up with the metrics, we use the metrics as provided by the U.S. government and try to apply them. Again, you are putting me into that scary zone for inspector generals and that is enunciating policy. I again will refer to another President: I feel your pain. I am a taxpayer, too, but policy issues have to be decided by somebody else. We do process. As I told you before, I think at one of our other meetings, I am the eternal optimist. I think we can accomplish something in Afghanistan, but that is my personal opinion. As an auditor, I know my auditors behind me are saying, "Oh, well you have got to follow

GAGAS [generally accepted government auditing standards] on your personal opinion." But my personal opinion, I think we can do.

But I do also want to keep in—let us keep in mind that we have lost a good many troops, and a lot of our treasury there, and we don't want to lose it all, and have wasted all of it now that we are coming into the transition. This is probably the most important period, now, with the drawdown in the troops, we have got to get it right. And that is what we are trying to emphasize with the maps, we are trying to emphasize with all the reports, and I personally think that hearings like this are very important, because you are getting the message out to your colleagues, we are making a record of the concerns you have, the concerns we have, and the points and concerns that every witness has. So I am again, I believe in the process and I think the process is working having this type of conversation.

Mr. JONES. Well in closing, I just would like to say to whomever is watching this to hold Congress responsible, to have benchmarks, whether it be talking about helping the women of Afghanistan or whatever the project might be, and if we are not making those benchmarks, then stop spending the money and stop sending young men and women to die in Afghanistan. So anyway, Madam Chairman, thank you for the time.

Mrs. ROBY. Mr. Andrews.

Mr. ANDREWS. Thank you. Madam Chair, I would like to thank you and the other members of the committee for being so diligent about this issue, traveling to that country on multiple occasions, and I think you are doing some of the most meaningful work in this Congress by your diligence here, and I am proud to be associated with it in a very minor way after the work you have done.

This, what we hear is overwhelming, just overwhelming that in a country of 31 million people, apparently there are only 120,000 women have a high school diploma. Eighty-seven percent of Afghan women report being victimized by some sort of physical violence or coerced sexual activity. It is appalling. But, you know, when all seems lost, there are some metrics, as my friend from North Carolina just said, that make you feel a little more optimistic. If I read this correctly, that around the time of the U.S. invasion or shortly before, the life expectancy for Afghan women was 44 years. It is now 62 years. That is an unbelievable achievement for which the Afghan women themselves deserve the most credit, but this country and its taxpayers, its troops, its civilians, public servants deserve credit, including each of you.

I was sobered, however, Dr. Katzman, when I heard your four scenarios. It is really sobering when you think about all of the investment of life and blood and money for a dozen years, that the best scenario of the four is the status quo, which is grim. The other three compete in terms of their grimness. I am not sure that I would disagree with your assessment, so let me ask anyone on the panel, or each of you, this question. Given the probability that there will be very rough times for Afghan women and girls when troops are withdrawn, given the high probability that is the case, in which institution in Afghanistan is there the strongest measure of progress for women and girls? In which institution have we had the greatest positive impact? And I ask that question so that we

can have some guidance on where to focus our future resources. I am kind of looking for an oasis here, a place that is most likely to be a success story in the years ahead. Dr. Katzman, would you want to answer first?

Dr. KATZMAN. Thank you very much, Congressman. You know, in my testimony, what I tried to do is put in some specific names of some very inspiring and very powerful and successful women in Afghanistan, because they don't get a lot of press. We talk about statistics, and infant mortality is way down, which adds to, what you pointed out, but in government, you know, just in governance, we have a very successful woman governor, Habiba Sarobi, she is now a vice presidential candidate. We have had, in my testimony, one woman who is an Afghan, Malala. We hear about Malala Yousafzai, Malalai Joya in Afghanistan. She stood up at a big loya jirga, which is a traditional Afghan assembly, and was shouting down these commanders who I was mentioning, for past abuses during the various civil wars.

And then, you know, obviously they retaliated and basically drove her out of Afghanistan, but there are a lot of powerful women, so I would say in the governance structure, in the Parliament, at the district, you know, at the mainly in the central government, in the ministries, the Ministry of Education, there is a Ministry of Women's Affairs. The core of the Kabul government is where you are seeing, and in the Parliament is where you see a lot of success. And in the ANSF too, although I am a little skeptical that that is going to continue.

Mr. ANDREWS. But how about outside the government, because if one of your scenarios comes true and the government implodes, or has no functioning control, are there any non-governmental institutions out provincially that are stronger or working?

Dr. KATZMAN. There are. I mean, many civil societies, you know, we have the Afghan Women's Networks, a lot of civil society groups that advocate for women have come up. However, if these scenarios come to pass, the dire scenarios, those groups are likely going to be somewhat suppressed, unfortunately.

Mr. ANDREWS. Anybody else have a suggestion?

Mr. SOPKO. I think that what the doctor said, the last point is the one I would focus on. If security goes south, all the scenarios are extremely negative, and there is no organization that will protect the women, so we have to focus on making certain that the ANSF and the rule of law, as fragile as it is, exists. And I can just add, Congressman, I don't know, and we haven't done that audit yet, but hopefully when that audit gets done that we reference, we will find out what has succeeded the best and what hasn't. As you probably know, I sent that letter to all the major agencies asking for your top 10 successes, and DOD [Department of Defense], State, and AID refused to answer it, saying they couldn't rack and stack. Now personally I find that troubling and I think you and Congress should, because that is a requirement of OMB [Office of Management and Budget] that you are able to rack and stack your programs on what succeeds.

Mr. ANDREWS. I am sure that that sounds like a good project for us.

Mr. SOPKO. Yes.

Mr. ANDREWS. I yield back. Thank you.

Mrs. ROBY. Dr. Katzman, I want to talk to you about the scenarios that you presented and really get you to elaborate because obviously, your worst-case scenario is, as Mr. Jones pointed out, that is where the fragile part comes in, that it is very fragile. And when you talk to women in Afghanistan, there is a real recognition that getting back to that place would completely gut every—you know, and these are women who have put their lives on the line, and do it every single day.

But I really want you to, if you could, elaborate and about the importance of the participation, and you, as well, the importance of the participation of women in this election, and how important—and we can't emphasize this enough—a peaceful transfer of power is going to dictate what the likely outcome will be, based on your analysis.

Dr. KATZMAN. Thank you. I would say, let's look at the reports, and I believe them to be true, that Mr. Karzai favors his former foreign minister, Zalmay Rassoul, who I have met on a number of occasions. He is very progressive. Was educated in the West, in Europe. He is a modernizer.

One of his key opponents in the election is Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf. He is a Saudi-backed mujahideen commander, who was very successful against the Soviet Union, and then went into parliament, where he has fought to basically block the law on eliminating violence against women from becoming law.

It basically is a Karzai decree. Karzai issued the EVAW [Elimination of Violence Against Women] by decree. The parliament has been talking about passing it into law. Sayyaf has blocked it—along with his allies. He is not the only one.

So, depending on who wins, you can get very different results.

Karzai's brother is running, Quayum. He used to have a restaurant in Baltimore. He used to come all the time, when the Taliban were in power. And no one ever met with him, but, it was a sad time.

But he is also, like his brother, somewhat progressive.

So, Dr. Abdullah is running. He ran last time. He is from the northern area. Again, very progressive. Very pro-West.

So, depending on who wins, you can have different outcomes.

Mrs. ROBY. And under the scenario that you talked about, with the factions, I guess—

Dr. KATZMAN. Faction leaders.

Mrs. ROBY. Yes. Do you think that they—I mean, I know that this is all kind of trying to predict the future stuff, but do you honestly believe under that scenario that those individuals would be able to keep the Taliban at bay? I mean, wouldn't it be worst-case scenario plus something worse?

Does that make sense?

Dr. KATZMAN. Yes. Some postulate civil war. Basically, these faction leaders are mostly from the north and west. They are mostly non-Pashtuns. The Taliban are Pashtun. So the hypothesis is these faction leaders are gonna re-arm and fight against the Pashtun Taliban. And there will be a civil war.

I am not sure I am where that is as far as that being that dire of a civil war. I do think the Taliban will be kept roughly at bay.

But the faction leaders will simply re-assert themselves, because rule of law is going to deteriorate, because the international community is not there watching the Afghans as closely anymore.

A lot of the gains we have seen is because we have been riding them. You know, we are on them. We are threatening to withhold money, or we are, you know, enacting provisions like we have talked about today.

And they do respond. Once we are not there, as much, it going to become—revert back to the way it was before we were there.

Mrs. ROBY. Sure.

Ms. Barsa, do you know, we spent some time at Herat University on our last trip. Forty percent of their student population are women. Very encouraged by that.

One of the things, as we even look at the map that Mr. Sopko put on the board, you know, there are kind of the four corners that are—where there will be a presence. Then you have all these rural areas that we are really worried about.

In your opinion, do you think that women have gained enough that they can't be stopped at this point? Like they have had a taste and they will continue to seek out. Or do you think that they—I mean, we talk about being fragile. How fragile is it? I mean, how easily would they be forced back into the corner and darkness?

Ms. BARSA. Well, there is not a single answer to that, because it varies quite dramatically from region to region. In the west, I think—in the west and north, in particular, I think that you will see women maintain a lot of the gains.

The experience and quality of life for women in those two regions is quite different from what you will see in the east and the south. Right?

And so, I think—you also have to take into consideration the political negotiations that are ongoing in those regions already, right, but also acknowledge the role that women are playing in those political negotiations, which is something that I think we miss.

As we look at the dysfunction of the national level peace process, I think we are missing some of what is happening at a provincial level in terms of reintegration efforts and local reconciliation efforts that are being integrated into that.

So you have provincial peace committees overseeing those efforts. There are three women on each of the committees, a minimum of three women. And they are negotiating directly with commanders. They are mediating intertribal disputes that are leading to destabilization at a district level. And, really, demonstrating their value and leadership in a tangible and concrete way to the extent that it is being recognized by men in official authority positions.

Mrs. ROBY. Right.

Ms. BARSA. In Kandahar, for example, one of the women on the provincial peace committee was nominated to be deputy head of the council, based on her work in mediating intertribal disputes.

Mrs. ROBY. And that is real.

Ms. BARSA. That is real. Yes.

Mrs. ROBY. Okay. Thanks.

My time has expired. I want to hear more.

But, Ms. Duckworth.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Madam Chair.

And, Mr. Sopko, it is good to see you again.

I want to return back to something that you had actually said in Oversight and Government Reform looking at the diversity of projects that are ongoing and applying it to Afghanistan.

You know, as you said, DOD, USAID, State Department can't rack and stack for you. And then, in looking at what we do post-pullout of the U.S. troops, is there any way forward in terms of coordinating what is happening?

Or do you have any recommendations on how we would be able to have oversight of all of the different departments, you know, that are trying to do these projects in Afghanistan, at least from our end, with the U.S. money that is going over there, so that we know that, for example, USAID is here, trying to do this project for women and girls, but then, again, so is the State Department Office of Ambassador for Women and Girls, and the like?

Mr. SOPKO. Well, you actually highlighted one of the problems that one of our prior audits had dealing with women's issues. And we issued the one, I believe it was in 2010 or 2011, looking at coordination, and we noticed there was a lack of coordination.

I supposed if there is somebody who can try to coordinate it, to some extent, our looking at all of these programs tries to, using the bully pulpit to get people to coordinate.

But that is one of the most serious problems we have. People just don't talk to each other.

And, if you recall when I spoke at the Oversight and Government Reform Committee hearing, I talked about those seven questions. And one of them was coordinate with the Afghans, but it was also coordinate internally.

And we are not coordinating with our allies. I just came back from NATO and was a bit surprised to find out that the NATO allies didn't know about some of the things that DOD and the EU was even doing, so—and AID.

So that is a major problem we have, on coordination.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Ms. Barsa, do you have any information on the type of work that is being done by some of the U.S. allies for women and girls in Afghanistan right now?

Ms. BARSA. I have information that is focused on the peace and security intervention. Not more broadly.

So there is quite a bit of work that is being done. Most of the work that is being done to fund police mentorship work and the formation of policewomen's associations and the lobbying that those associations are doing to police commanders is being facilitated by Afghan women's NGOs but with funding from European nations, from the Dutch in particular. They are really coming out ahead on that.

In the peace and security realm, you know, that varies. The Norwegians are really doing quite a bit of work to train women in skills related to community mobilization and the value of women's inclusion in the peace process and are funding quite a bit of work to forge bridges and links between women in official authority positions and women in civil society, so women on the provincial peace committees and provincial counsels together with women's, what you might call NGOs or voluntary associations, women who are doing really productive work in service to their communities at a

provincial level, which I think is doing quite a bit in service of expanding women's political power and a space for them in the political discussion and debate.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Can you—just off the top of my head, I am thinking of other nations, I mean, yes, the U.S. is going to take a leading role, and we certainly hold a big chunk of the purse strings.

But looking at some of the other nations around the world that also have a history or a tradition of strong democracy, of women participating in the democratic process, especially those like—places like Malaysia, Indonesia, that are Muslim nations, is there any potential there for us to reach out to those nations for help in Afghanistan?

Ms. BARSA. Huge potential. And particularly as it relates to security force development. So this is something we have looked at a lot. It is funding professional development opportunities and exchanges between not just Afghan women in the forces, but also their male commanders, with Islamic nations that have a strong presence of women in their forces, and to look at how that has functioned, the value that has been added, and the systems that have been put in place to support that. So 100 percent.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Great to hear.

Dr. Katzman, can you add to something like that?

Dr. KATZMAN. Well, I just wanted to mention Turkey. Because, you know, Turkey does basically command Kabul city in partnership with the Afghans. And, I am not a Turkey expert, but, you know, it has a somewhat Islamic government right now, but still a tradition of progressivity and secularism, particularly in its military.

And it is a big force contributor in Afghanistan.

I think Malaysia has a few, not many. I don't think Indonesia even has any forces in Afghanistan.

But I think the Turks, as a Muslim nation and a lot of the Afghans, particularly in the north, speak a Turkic dialect, Uzbek is a Turkic dialect. That might be something to look at.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Dr. Katzman.

I yield back, Madam Chair.

Mrs. ROBY. We are gonna run, go vote, really quickly.

So if you will be patient, there are only two votes, and we are 15 minutes into the first one, so we got to go, but we will come right back, if you guys don't mind waiting.

And for the members that are here, if you can come back, I would appreciate it as well. Thanks.

[Recess.]

Mrs. ROBY. Okay, thank you for your patience and letting us exercise our constitutional duty. I want to pick up on behalf of my colleague, Mrs. Davis. She, I don't think, can return, but I think something that in repeated conversations about our concerns about Afghan women one of the things that she has concentrated a lot of her efforts on is the election, the upcoming election.

And how can we make sure that they—the Afghan government—does not use the lack of women in the ANP as an excuse for women to not have the opportunity to exercise their right to vote.

One of the things that has come up a lot of times in our conversations, you know, both traveling back and forth to Afghanistan,

but also just even down on the floor is between Mrs. Davis and Ms. Tsongas and myself and others, is what creative ideas can we come up with and help facilitate to get women to the polls but ensure that their vote counts.

And so I am sure each of you have some ideas, maybe outside of your wheelhouse, but I am sure you each have an opinion of sorts. And so, again, on behalf of Mrs. Davis—and I know this is important to all of us, but this is of particular importance to her, and if she were here I am quite confident this is what she would probably ask you about.

Mr. SOPKO. If I can start, chairman. Actually we did an audit on the barriers to greater participation in women in the last Afghan election, and we found serious problems, similar to the problems I think you are seeing right now, and similar concerns, and we issued a number of recommendations, and that was an audit we did back in October of 2009.

And we recommended then to the ambassador, in conjunction with the United Nations, to urge the Independent Election Commission [IEC] to address those challenges of female candidates and voters, by taking a number of corrective actions, including proactively recruiting and training female IEC staff, and integrating women in the IEC planning process, communicating to all IEC staff the importance of following electoral law, increasing supervision over staff and publicly reporting violators, ensuring registration centers and polling places are secure, accessible locations, and raising awareness of the right of women to participate fully in electoral process.

And I think those recommendations are still valid today. The embassy agreed fully with those. So we hope they are being implemented or trying to implement them now.

Mrs. ROBY. And I am interested in hearing the other two, remarks, but one of the other things that we had talked about, you know, similar to what we do here in the United States as it relates to get-out-the-vote efforts.

I know that sounds very simplistic, but it is what makes the differences in elections is you have to get people to the polls.

And—oh, I am asking your question. I didn't think you were coming back.

[Laughter.]

Mrs. ROBY. But anyway, Susan and others, we have talked about, you know, using the women or helping to motivate the women that are—have had the privilege of education and are in a position to be leaders within their communities, particularly in the rural areas, to help guide women through this process.

So, if the other two want to make comments.

Ms. BARSA. Sure. I think, you know, there are a couple of pieces to look at. One is security. Another is monitoring and engagement. And the third is civic education.

So on the security piece, the plan in place right now is to contract temporary female security personnel for the election on the order of about 13,000. And the hope is that they can look to existing female teachers, train them up in 2 to 3 days, and secure contracts just to staff maybe a last-ditch voter registration effort and then certainly the polling stations on the day of the election.

All of that is a bit behind schedule because of resourcing issues. And so we will see how effective that is, but that is a key component.

Then there is the monitoring piece. So some of what we have been doing is training women in how to monitor political transition processes and helping them develop their own tools for what they want to prioritize as key indicators for a transparent, legitimate process, and one that has adequate attention to women and gender, right?

And so they are collecting that information and feeding it back up. And then we do additional training on how you communicate findings to decisionmakers and people with official authority over those issues.

The last piece, like you mentioned, the get out the vote or civic education piece. One of the flaws with the ways we have approached civic education in Afghanistan thus far is that we treat it much more like a training on how to vote. So the actual physical logistics of what you do when you arrive at the voting station and helping women be aware that nobody is watching them. No one will know who they voted for and there will be no repercussions for who they vote for because they receive quite a number of intimidating threats in advance of the election.

But we don't do civic education that is oriented towards understanding how you choose a candidate of your preference, right; how you understand each individual's political platform and whether or not it services your needs, and how you can engage candidates in discussions about what needs need to be met and their approach to addressing those.

So I think that will be a big piece in looking towards the success not only of the presidential election, but certainly the parliamentary elections to follow, and whether or not we can oversee, fund and support a robust civic education effort.

Mrs. ROBY. I want to ask Dr. Katzman, you stated in your response to one of my other questions, is that, you know, the outcome of the election, of course, you have candidates that represent very differing interests when it comes to the rights of women, is what I understood you to say. And that being the case, that civic component as it relates to helping these women understand how to choose the candidate and what that person represents to them is going to be so crucial.

My time is expired, and Mrs. Davis, it is your turn. And I will just tell you that I apologize. I didn't know you were coming back, but I am sure you can expound on those in your 5 minutes.

Mrs. DAVIS. That is fine, Madam Chair. I wasn't sure—I didn't think I could, but I wanted to come back because I was a little concerned.

I think, Ms. Barsa, I guess everybody really mentioned that the needs to have women at the polls to assist with other women as their confidence level and comfort level that they are actually going to be able to vote is really critical.

And we certainly heard that on our last trip to Afghanistan. And it concerned me that maybe we had kind of written that off in some way, that we, you know, realized that we cannot do it really the

way we wanted to, and therefore, you know, maybe it wasn't going to come out so well.

So I just wondered whether that was a—was I hearing that correctly? And you mentioned just now that you will have some contract, temporary assistance, whether teachers or whatever. I didn't know whether there was an opportunity to also bring women in from other Muslim countries as an example or even the U.S., I mean, making certain that the women who were still in-country were available and if that was going to be helpful.

Obviously, we are dealing with both the city and the rural areas, that we know it is important, and yet it sounded like maybe we weren't going to move forward. I also had asked recently at a hearing, and basically was told the kind of "Look, we have got it—we have it under control." And it doesn't sound like we do.

Dr. KATZMAN. One thing I wanted to point out. You know, one woman did file to run for president, Fatima Ghaznowi. Okay? And October 6th was the registration deadline. She filed. October 23rd, the IEC had its first cut. She was nixed. So now there is no female running for president.

In the past presidential elections in 2004 and 2009, there was at least one woman candidate. Now, they didn't do particularly well, but they ran. Massouda Jalal, very well known, first minister of women's affairs. Also, the election law for this election cut—there is a quota in the elections that 25 percent of each provincial council, each of the 34 provinces has a council, like a little state legislature-type thing; 25 percent must be women. Okay, the election law has cut that now to 20 percent.

Also, the registration. I mean, we have sort of, we are in a way behind the curve because registration has already started. What we saw in the last election in 2009 is many women did not register. Or basically what happened, men registered for them. Men would just take their—a lot of it is cultural. I mean, it is not all—it is not a policy problem. This is the thinking. So—

Mrs. DAVIS. We even run into that occasionally here.

[Laughter.]

Mrs. DAVIS. So, yes, I understand. I think part of it is trying to understand best where this is in terms of our priorities and moving forward. And if, in fact, it is important to the future in a way that may be out of proportion to our ability to plan better at this time, do we have time to put in additional effort with NGOs and others. And I am just trying to get a feel for is this a place for us—you know, if there is one place to focus right now before our troops pull out, with the exception hopefully of a 10,000 force, is this it? Or maybe it is not.

Mr. SOPKO. Can I just add? I mean, I think we are faced with three major transitions. We have referred to the security transition, which is obviously important. The political transition is a key. And if the election is bad, we could lose it on that.

And then, of course, the third transition is we are moving toward this direct assistance. So I think you are absolutely correct. Now is the time to make the difference. Now is the time to focus on this and to get the Afghan government to either hire the police, hire the poll watchers, whether they are temporary or otherwise, but you have got to do it now. It may be too late if we wait.

Mrs. DAVIS. Okay. Thank you. And I really appreciate, Madam Chair, your having this hearing. And I think that you have all mentioned in one way or another, I think one of the reasons that we kept going back was we saw the strength of these incredible women in the face of unbelievable adversity. And you knew that given just a little bit of support, they would be able to make changes in their communities that nobody else could do. I mean, it really—they are the ones who can do it.

Thank you so much.

Mrs. ROBY. Thank you, Mrs. Davis.

Ms. Tsongas.

Ms. TSONGAS. I want to thank you all for what has been a really very interesting and so important discussion.

One of the things that I keep coming back to in my mind is, as I, like everyone of us here have made these many trips to Afghanistan. In our last visit, one woman said to us, we were in Kabul at a meeting, and she said: "We don't expect more. We just want the space to fight for what we have."

And so we understand that there is a limit to what we can do, and yet we want to be sure that, you know, that we are doing as much as we can to allow Afghan women to continue the fight. We know it is a long-term effort. It has certainly been one—the United States' effort has been long term. But you have got to have the space to do it.

So whether it is a security space, whether it is a political space, or whether it is the economic space, there are a lot of ways in which we have to think about it.

And as we have been listening today, just a couple of things, Mr. Sopko, as you do your audit, it is an after-the-fact thing, as opposed to prospective, but I think it is so important that you look at what has succeeded and why. You know, what about it made it successful?

If you look at the amount of money that has actually been, you know, clearly spent on women issues, related to women and children, it is so small in relationship to the total amount of dollars that have gone into Afghanistan. So, and yet we see the successes. They may not cover huge numbers, but where they do have an impact, it is very apparent how real it is. So we have gotten a lot of money, gotten a lot of bang for our buck, at least in those specific dollars.

Now, a lot of other dollars have gone in in a more generic way and I am sure they have also helped promote women and girls. But I think to be very thoughtful about it, we have heard that there are differences in what has happened at the national level as opposed to the provincial level. I hope you will look at that.

It would be interesting to know in those parts of the country that are more progressive, in which women's rights continue to be recognized and promoted and there are efforts to secure them. You know, are those the areas where the ANSF has had better ability to recruit women? I mean, is there a linkage there? I think it would be interesting to look at those prospectively.

I also think it would be interesting to look at, a lot of money has come through the provincial reconstruction teams. Has that been an effective mechanism? Has that really worked? Or is the money

that comes through the NGO community a better way to spend our dollars?

So lots of things to look at prospectively, I mean, after the fact. Because as we go forward, it will help guide how we continue to make investments so that we can be a partner and continue to allow women, promote the rights of women to continue to fight for what they think is so important for them as individuals and for their country.

Mr. SOPKO. Congressman, if I can just respond briefly. As I mentioned to you I think yesterday, we did not get a satisfactory response from DOD, AID and State on what worked and what didn't work and why. So, I met with a number of smaller NGOs who are working in the provinces, working in the community. And actually they complained. They said, "You are doing a great job, but you are tarring us with the same brush that these large corporations who maybe screwing up out there have."

And I heard them. I said, "Okay, what do you think works, the smaller charities that are working out there, the smaller NGOs? You tell me." So they said, "That sounds great." So we are going to be sending a letter to the smaller NGOs operating just to answer that type of question that you have proposed.

Likewise, we are going to be doing a capping report on the PRTs [provincial reconstruction teams], what worked, what didn't work, and why. So, those are two projects that we are going to be doing in addition to our looking at how we are handling the funds for women and girls in Afghanistan.

Ms. TSONGAS. And Ms. Barsa, if you want to comment at all?

Ms. BARSA. Sure. I mean, I couldn't agree with you more on the bang-for-your-buck question particularly. And when we are thinking about how to make our aid more effective, I hope that we think about women's integration as a key to that, particularly when we are looking at things like building legitimacy and professionalism of a police force, right, when 6 out of 10 Afghans believe that female police are likely to resolve a crime more fairly than a man would, right?

So, I think, you know—

Ms. TSONGAS. It sounds like the United States use of women in Congress.

[Laughter.]

Ms. BARSA. There are now about 400 Afghan women's NGOs registered in-country. And the work that they are doing is beyond. And the conversations that they are having with police commanders and ANA commanders at a provincial level are really what is driving change.

They are having conversations about, you know, what the true nature of security threats are at a provincial level, and whether or not an all-male force can address those threats. Inevitably, the answer is no, from the male commanders themselves.

And really, that is the way that you can force this change, both from the top down and the bottom up. So I think, you know, I won't comment on the PRT issue. I have maybe some of my own personal perspectives on that, but I certainly think that the assisting NGO community is a solid pathway forward on this.

Ms. TSONGAS. Mr. Katzman, quickly.

Dr. KATZMAN. Well, I mean, I think we have been talking a lot about incentives. What does Karzai care about and what is his successor going to care about? Three things: arms, money and Pakistan. To force change on the Afghans, you need to go with those core interests if you want to get them to make reforms and keep the reforms that have been made on women going, on corruption. It could be anything—education, corruption, women. You need to work those core interests that they have.

They want protection against Pakistan. They want F-16 combat aircraft, which they are probably not going to get because they can't fly them. And they want a guarantee of U.S. money for the Afghan National Security Forces and the economy. So those are your levers that you are basically working with.

The work that the NGOs are doing are great, and the problem is prospectively, when we are not there to basically ride them and oversee what the Afghans are doing. A lot of that is going to deteriorate. So you have to find ways to make it in their interest to continue that work after there are not 85,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan, when there are only 8,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan. That is the key to consider, I think.

Ms. TSONGAS. Thank you.

Mrs. ROBY. Okay. Just a few comments, you know, as we close here. You know, I just want to say first of all the women that were here today, all of us, have spent time, and 36 hours in theater is never enough time, in the—you know, only visiting that country once a year. But I can tell you all of us as wives and mothers who have little experience, if any, overcoming adversity on this level, as we watch these women who struggle, this has, you know, become a deeply personal issue for all of us here, particularly when you are meeting their children and getting to spend time with them in their country.

And I just want to make one other comment about, you know, we say women and little girls, but this is just as much about the little boys, too. And, you know, in a country where we have seen life expectancy increase in a country that has been at war for 30-plus years, you have a generation or more that have never known anything but what they see every day. And, you know, I think it is very important to educate—not just to worry about the education of the little girls, but to educate the little boys, too, and about respecting the little girls in a different way.

And so, again, I just wanted to express, you know, my—Niki and I were talking on the way back. I mean, you just to be there and to look these women in the eye and, you know, hear their personal stories of their struggle, it makes it very, very real to all of us who have participated in this hearing today.

And I guess the last question I would just ask each of you to briefly comment on, because it is something that we struggle with as women in Congress, what role do you see for us as women in the United States Congress to play as it relates to the furtherance of women's rights in Afghanistan? And I will let you each comment on that.

Mr. SOPKO. I think what you are doing today is the most significant thing you can do. And it is holding people accountable, asking the questions, and doing the oversight.

Ms. BARS. I think continuing to have the conversations that identify this issue as core to our civilian and military mission in theater is really key; that it is an effort that is in service of mission objectives really for democracy promotion and countering terrorism and the provision of security for all Afghan men and women. And that women's participation is the key to ensuring women's protection in the long run.

Dr. KATZMAN. Of course, CRS [Congressional Research Services] isn't in a position to suggest any legislation, obviously, but if you look at what was done during the Taliban regime, actually the legislation that was passed criticizing the Taliban was actually—on their treatment of women—way before anybody mentioned bin Laden or terrorism. The criticism of the Taliban, 1996 when they took power, was on the basis of their treatment of women.

There was a Senate resolution by Senator Boxer that was passed. There was other legislation, a lot of legislation on that. And that was way before September 11 or the Africa embassy bombings or anything. And it basically said the Clinton administration should not recognize the Taliban as the government of Afghanistan unless and until it improves its treatment of women.

So, there have been legislative models that have been passed that you could look at.

Mrs. ROBY. I appreciate that. And, you know, one of the most meaningful conversations that we have had with Afghan women in Afghanistan is from their position. You know, we cannot allow for the gains that they have made to be bartered away for other things. And so, you know, again, that is why we wanted to have this hearing.

That is why we are going to continue to keep a close eye on what we are seeing happen politically because we very much think that this is, you know, we have our leverage, but, you know, there are other political interests at stake as well. And we have got to make sure that that is not what they use.

So, on behalf of Ranking Member Tsongas and myself, thank you all for being here. This has been a very, very meaningful hearing today. And so thank you for your time, and we look forward to continuing discussions with you in the future.

[Whereupon, at 2:44 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

OCTOBER 29, 2013

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

OCTOBER 29, 2013

**Opening Remarks
As Prepared For Delivery**

**Hon. Martha Roby
Chairman
Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee hearing**

**“Report from SIGAR: Challenges to Securing Afghan Women's
Gains in a Post-2014 Environment”**

October 29, 2013

Welcome to this afternoon’s oversight hearing.

Before we begin, I would like to take a moment to note the passing of our former Chairman, Rep. Ike Skelton. Although I never served with Mr. Skelton, I know he represented the best of this committee, and never forgot the importance of putting the needs of our men and women in uniform first. Our thoughts are with his family, friends, and colleagues.

Today we convene a hearing with the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction and two outside experts. We will receive testimony on the challenges of ensuring the important security, educational, and economic gains that Afghan women have made in recent years are not lost as the United States transitions its force posture in 2014.

This subcommittee convened a related hearing in April. At that time, we received testimony emphasizing that it is essential that Afghanistan develop a lasting and functioning government with capable police and military forces. A safe and secure Afghanistan is a necessary predicate to ensuring that all are protected: men and women.

Members of this subcommittee are deeply committed to this topic. In May, I led my second trip to Afghanistan. Joined by Ms. Tsongas, Ms. Duckworth, and several others, our agenda focused on women’s issues. We saw first-hand women and girls who were attending schools and universities, holding elected office,

joining the military and police forces, and pursuing new opportunities previously denied to them.

These are important gains that must not disappear once the U.S. reduces its forces in Afghanistan, and we must closely monitor conditions during this critical transition. The safety and security of Afghan women remains an important barometer for the success of our efforts.

**Statement of Hon. Niki Tsongas
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations hearing**

**“Report from SIGAR: Challenges to Securing Afghan Women's
Gains in a Post-2014 Environment”**

October 29, 2013

Thank you, Chairwoman Roby, for working with my office to arrange this hearing today. I believe that this is a vital opportunity to build on the important and bipartisan discussions on these issues which our subcommittee had in an April hearing on Afghan women in the ANSF, and in our July closed briefing with Mr. Sopko.

Ms. Roby and I have also travelled to Afghanistan together and witnessed firsthand the significant gains Afghan women have made over the past decade in areas such as health, governance and education. Both of us saw what was at stake as our forces continue to draw down, and so I would also like to thank all of our witnesses for being here today, each with your own incredibly valuable perspective.

I would also particularly like to thank you, Mr. Sopko, for the long-term commitment you have made to prioritize oversight over Afghan women's issues. Your office faces an enormous array of challenges in Afghanistan and is responsible for monitoring every aspect of our reconstruction efforts under logistically frustrating circumstances. I was very encouraged by your recently-announced comprehensive audit of our programs for Afghan women and girls, due early next year.

From your written testimonies it is apparent that each of you is fundamentally in agreement that while there have been precious gains made for Afghan women and girls over the past decade, these gains are already threatened and will face significant challenges after the bulk of our Armed Forces have withdrawn at the end of 2014. Mr. Sopko's testimony also notes the significant obstacles his and

other federal agencies will face in performing oversight on the ground due to security challenges; as much as 80% of the country may simply be inaccessible.

After 2014, not only may the gains which have been made for women be eroded in these areas, it is also likely that we may not even know the full extent of the setbacks, given the various challenges which I have outlined.

I also look forward to hearing each of your thoughts on how we can improve recruiting and retention of Afghan women in the ANSF and Afghan National Police. The issue is increasingly timely due to a number of second order effects of low recruitment, such as the approaching Presidential elections in April and the inability of Afghan women wishing to cast ballots to do so unless there are adequate women in uniform available to search them. The ANSF is not meeting its recruiting objectives, and the obstacles are varied and significant.

Thank you again for being here, and I look forward to your testimony.



SIGAR

Testimony before the
House Committee on Armed Services,
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

**Oversight Challenges and Their
Implications for Afghan Women
and Girls**

Statement of John F. Sopko,
Special Inspector General
for Afghanistan Reconstruction
October 29, 2013

Chairman Roby, Ranking Member Tsongas, and Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on our oversight of the Afghanistan reconstruction effort. My statement today will focus on two issues—SIGAR’s work related to Afghan women and girls, and the work SIGAR has issued this past quarter related to the Afghan National Security Forces.

Support for Afghan Women and Girls Is Integral to the Reconstruction Effort

The U.S. government, along with other international donors, has recognized the importance of addressing the needs of Afghan women as part of the overall reconstruction effort.

According to the U.S. Foreign Assistance for Afghanistan Post Performance Management Plan for 2011-2015, “women’s empowerment is inextricably linked to the achievement of USG objectives in Afghanistan—including improvements in areas such as security, economic opportunity, governance, and social development.” Similarly, one of the mutual commitments agreed to in the July 2012 Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework is that “strengthened governance and institutions with a particular focus on the rights of women are prerequisites for strong and sustainable economic growth, employment generation and prosperity for the Afghan people.” The U.S. Civil-Military Strategic Framework, which the U.S. Embassy in Kabul issued in August of this year, identifies the role of women in society as a key cross-cutting effort. It says the United States will “support policies and programs that continue to advance the essential role of women in society, including increased access for women to justice, health care, education, and economic and political leadership opportunities.” It adds that U.S. policy and programs “will seek to engage all aspects of the Afghan population on the positive impacts of women’s development and empowerment.”¹

In line with U.S. policy, funding for women’s initiatives is often integrated or “mainstreamed” into broader reconstruction programs. For example, agriculture or health programs that are not specifically targeted toward women may still have significant gender components or identifiable goals and benefits for Afghan women.

As a result of this mainstreaming, it is not possible to specify the total amount of U.S. funds spent in support of Afghan women. However, from fiscal year 2003 through fiscal year 2010, Congress earmarked \$627 million in appropriated funds to address the needs of Afghan women and girls. Congress directed these earmarks to certain Afghan organizations, including the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MOWA), the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), and Afghan women-led non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Since 2011, Congress has not earmarked a specific amount for women and girls. Rather, it has made assistance funding contingent upon USAID certifying that the Afghan government is, among other things, “taking credible steps to protect the internationally recognized

¹ U.S. Civil-Military Strategic Framework for Afghanistan, Kabul, August 2013, p 12

human rights of Afghan women.”² Since 2011, Congress has also stipulated that the Economic Support Fund and the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement account support, to the maximum extent possible, the participation of Afghan women in programming and directly improve the security, economic and social well-being, and political status of women. Congress has called for continued support of the MOWA, AIHRC, and Afghan women-led NGOs.³

Although funds for women are generally “mainstreamed,” there are some initiatives specifically targeted toward women and girls. In February 2010, for example, the U.S. Embassy Kabul launched its \$4.5 million Afghan Women's Empowerment (AWE) grants program, which has provided quick-impact grants to civil society organizations, including non-governmental organizations and universities, to undertake projects advancing women's participation in the political sphere. Additionally, the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) \$14 million Ministry of Women's Affairs Organizational Restructuring and Empowerment (MORE) project, started in December 2012, is designed to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

Afghan Women and Girls Continue to Face Tremendous Challenges

Over the last decade, Afghanistan has made some progress in advancing the rights of females, providing critical services to women and girls, and protecting this vulnerable population from violence. While SIGAR has not independently verified the statistics that point to progress, available indicators do suggest some improvements.

For example, Afghan women have reportedly become increasingly involved in civic affairs, assuming positions that would have been off-limits to them under Taliban rule. According to the U.S. Embassy Kabul Gender Strategy, women now make up 19 percent of the Afghan government workforce. In addition, according to recent news reports, 240 of the candidates for the provincial council are women.

In 2009, Afghan President Hamid Karzai signed the Elimination of Violence against Women law, which, for the first time, criminalized such forms of violence as rape, forced self-immolation, and human trafficking.

Women and girls appear to have made gains in other areas, as well. The Kabul Embassy's Interagency Gender Working Group reports that nearly 120,000 Afghan girls have graduated from high school, 15,000 women are enrolled in universities, and almost 500 women are on university faculties.

² Public Law 112-10, April 15, 2011

³ Public Law 112-10, April 15, 2011

Despite these advances, however, Afghan women and girls remain largely marginalized. The United Nations' Gender Inequality Index puts Afghanistan near the bottom, ranking it 175 of 186 nations rated in 2012.⁴ Many Afghan women continue to be victims of gender-based violence. A 2008 nationwide survey of 4,700 Afghan women found that 87.2 percent had experienced at least one form of physical, sexual, or psychological violence or forced marriage in their lifetimes.⁵ The United Nations Development Fund for Women reports that 57 percent of all marriages that take place in Afghanistan are child marriages.⁶ Moreover, a 2011 United Nations report found that despite enactment of the Elimination of Violence against Women law, it was "clear that the [Afghan] government has not yet applied the law to the vast majority of cases of violence against women."⁷

Literacy rates among Afghan women and girls lag far behind those for Afghan men and boys. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has reported that the literacy rate for women is 12 percent, compared to 39 percent for men.⁸ According to the Kabul Embassy's Interagency Gender Working Group, key obstacles to education for girls and women include early marriage; restricted movement; insecurity; distance to schools; shortage of female teachers and facilities; competing demands on girls' and women's time; the lower value attached to girls and women's education; and outright opposition to educating females.

While life expectancy for Afghan women has reportedly increased from 44 years of age in 2001 to 62 years today⁹—a noteworthy improvement—health conditions in Afghanistan remain among the worst in the world, with the highest rates of death and disability experienced by infants, children, and mothers during childbirth.

Recent incidents underscore the level of danger that women in Afghanistan continue to face. SIGAR has reported that when an Afghan woman parliamentarian attempted in May 2013 to strengthen the country's anti-violence law for women, the intense outcry against proposed provisions, such as shelters for abuse victims and a minimum age for marriage, forced a stop to debate after 15 minutes.¹⁰ Just last month, one of Afghanistan's highest ranking policewomen was assassinated. Lieutenant Negar was shot by motorcycle gunmen

⁴ International Human Development Indicators; <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/68606.html>

⁵ Global Rights, "Living with Violence: A National Report on Domestic Abuse in Afghanistan," March 2008.

⁶ UNIFEM Afghanistan, "The Situation of Women in Afghanistan," UNIFEM Afghanistan Fact Sheet, 2008. After publication of this fact sheet, UNIFEM was dissolved and incorporated into the newly established UN Entity for Gender Equity and the Empowerment of Women.

⁷ United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan and the United Nations Office of the High Commission for Human Rights, *A Long Way to Go: Implementation of the Elimination of Violence against Women Law in Afghanistan*, November 2011.

⁸ USAID, *Afghanistan: Gender Overview*, October 22, 2012.

⁹ Ali Swee, "Women in Afghanistan," quoting U.S. Institute of Peace Afghan scholar Hossai Wardak, Accuracy in Academia, June 13, 2013, <http://www.academia.org/women-in-afghanistan/>, accessed October 19, 2013.

¹⁰ SIGAR, *Quarterly Report to Congress*, July 30, 2013, p. 139.

in Helmand province on September 16, 2013. She had replaced Helmand's former senior female commanding officer, Islam Bibi, who had been gunned down only 2 months earlier.

SIGAR's Work Related to Afghan Women and Girls

SIGAR has issued two audit reports focused on Afghan women. In the first report, published in October 2009, we found that lack of a secure environment, as well as cultural and social constraints, had limited women's ability to fully exercise their political rights to register, campaign, and vote in the August 2009 elections.¹¹ Moreover, we found that the Independent Election Commission (IEC), Afghanistan's electoral body, and the United Nations lacked sufficient focus on resolving issues related to women prior to the election. For example, at least 80,000 female polling staff were needed, but only 43,341 were successfully recruited.

SIGAR recommended that the U.S. Ambassador in Afghanistan, in conjunction with the United Nations, urge the IEC to address the challenges that female candidates and voters face by taking a number of corrective actions, including proactively recruiting and training female IEC staff and integrating women in the IEC planning process. The U.S. Embassy in Kabul endorsed all of our recommendations.

As we approach the 2014 national elections, it will be critical that the IEC take concrete actions to prevent the types of problems we identified in the 2009 elections. Preliminary indications, however, are that the IEC will face many of the same problems it faced in 2009. For example, in August of this year, the IEC warned that a shortage of female police officers could keep women from voting. According to the IEC, it needs 12,000 female police officers to conduct body searches at polling stations. However, the Afghan National Police includes only 1,570 women—1 percent of the overall force.

SIGAR also conducted an audit related to the \$627 million the Congress earmarked from 2003-2010 to support Afghan women. This audit report, released in July 2010, found that the Department of State (State) and USAID did not coordinate their approaches to reporting on the use of congressionally appropriated funds to address the needs of Afghan women and girls.¹² As a result, Congress did not have complete information on how the funds it had earmarked were used to address the needs of Afghan women and girls. We also found that State and USAID had not fully met congressional directives calling for assistance to certain Afghan government entities. For example, the AIHRC was to receive at least \$11 million from 2004 to 2007. However, it received only \$5 million from USAID in 2004 for the next 3 years. Finally, we found that State and USAID had not articulated how U.S. funded activities

¹¹ SIGAR Audit 10-1, *Barriers to Greater Participation by Women in Afghan Elections*, October 2009.

¹² SIGAR Audit 10-13, *Greater Coordination Needed in Meeting Congressional Directives to Address and Report on the Needs of Afghan Women and Girls*, July 30, 2010.

directed toward Afghan women and girls aligned with either the U.S. or the Afghan governments' overall strategies for these populations.

In that report, SIGAR recommended that the Secretary of State, in consultation with the USAID Administrator, (1) develop consistent reporting requirements for all USAID and State programs and activities to provide data on female beneficiaries and measurable impacts of activities intended to address the needs of Afghan women and girls; (2) develop a coordinated approach to reporting on the use of earmarked funds; (3) align activities to ensure consistency with the goals and benchmarks stated in the U.S.-supported Afghanistan's national strategies; and (4) target funds to address the organizations specified in legislation. State and USAID concurred with these recommendations.

This year, SIGAR initiated another audit focused on Afghan women and girls that will, in part, assess the extent to which the problems we identified in our 2010 audit have been addressed. We began this audit, in part, due to interest from several members of Congress, including members of this Subcommittee. The audit will: (1) identify U.S. government programs or initiatives to improve the rights and treatment of women in Afghanistan since fiscal year 2011; (2) assess the extent to which these programs and initiatives have been coordinated across different U.S. government agencies; and (3) identify challenges in addressing women's issues in Afghanistan and evaluate U.S. efforts to address these challenges.

Preliminary information indicates that U.S. agencies have made some progress in improving their coordination of programs and initiatives geared toward women and girls. For example, as referenced above, the U.S. Embassy in Kabul has established an Interagency Gender Working Group, which released a new Gender Strategy in September 2012. This strategy is designed to be consistent with the Afghan government's National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan, as well as other key Afghan, international donor, and U.S. government documents, such as the U.S. Civil Military Strategic Framework for Afghanistan. We will issue our final report on this audit sometime next year.

SIGAR also recently began a broadly scoped audit examining U.S. efforts to strengthen Afghanistan's education sector. Because many of the U.S. government's education programs are directed toward girls and young women, this audit will likely include some discussion of gender-related issues. For example, the audit will include an assessment of programs such as the 5-year, \$31 million Partnership for Advancing Community Education in Afghanistan program, which aimed to improve girls' access to education in rural areas, and the Strengthening Education in Afghanistan project, which focused on accelerated learning programs for over-age students, particularly girls, in 13 schools. This audit will likely result in a series of reports, the first to be released in early 2014.

In addition to this ongoing audit work, SIGAR will continue to report on the status of Afghan women and girls in its congressionally mandated *Quarterly Report*. In our newest *Quarterly*

Report, to be released tomorrow, we once again raise concerns about the challenges of recruiting women into the Afghan National Security Forces. While the goal is for women to make up 10 percent of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan Air Force, they currently make up only 1 percent of these forces. According to the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A), there are currently 503 women serving in the ANA, and only 33 in the Afghan Air Force. Our October 2013 quarterly report also highlights a recent study published by Oxfam,¹³ which argued that recruiting more women into the police is critical for the safety of Afghan women and national stability. However, as noted above, efforts to recruit women into the Afghan National Police have also been largely unsuccessful, with only 1,570 female police officers nationwide—a figure that translates roughly into one female officer for every 10,000 women in the country.

Oversight Challenges as Military Withdraws May Be Exacerbated for Women and Girls

SIGAR is concerned about the impact of the coalition troop drawdown on security and the related implications for ensuring adequate oversight of the U.S.-funded reconstruction effort in Afghanistan, including programming for Afghan women and girls. Significant portions of Afghanistan are already inaccessible to SIGAR, other inspectors general, the Government Accountability Office, and other U.S. civilians conducting oversight, such as contracting officers. This constraint on oversight will only worsen as more U.S. and coalition bases close.

Although it is difficult to predict the future of the U.S. presence in Afghanistan, it is likely that less than a quarter of Afghanistan—mostly areas around cities and major bases—will be accessible to U.S. civilian oversight personnel by the end of the transition, a significant decrease since 2009. This will be a serious matter since Afghanistan is an overwhelmingly rural country—76 percent of the population as of 2012¹⁴—so countering Taliban influence over the rural majority of Afghans will also become more difficult as oversight-access zones shrink, thereby further complicating the reconstruction mission.

Direct oversight of reconstruction programs in much of Afghanistan will become prohibitively hazardous or even impossible as U.S. military units withdraw, coalition bases shut down, and civilian reconstruction offices in the field close. By extension, this also means that there will be fewer opportunities for contracting officers, their technical representatives, and other oversight personnel to observe and assess the extent to which female beneficiaries of reconstruction programs are receiving services, protected from the many dangers they face, and consulted in the design and implementation of projects intended to meet their needs.

¹³ Oxfam is an international confederation of 17 nongovernmental organizations dedicated to fighting poverty worldwide.

¹⁴ The World Bank, online data bank entry for Afghanistan, “Rural population (% of total population),” <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS/countries>, accessed October 19, 2013.

Just this quarter, USAID announced plans to commit \$200 million for the Promoting Gender Equity in National Priority Programs (PROMOTE) program designed to increase education, training, and promotion of women in Afghanistan's government, business sector, and civil society. USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah has called this initiative "the largest single investment USAID has ever made in its history in the future of women and girls anywhere in the world." The PROMOTE program is not expected to begin until the middle of 2014, at which point the military withdrawal will be nearing an end.

According to USAID, PROMOTE is in no way dependent on the U.S. troop presence because the program is designed to work with existing Afghan structures and provide civilian women with leadership opportunities. However, program documentation suggests that USAID's ability to directly oversee this program, which will be implemented nationwide, will be limited. For example, the PROMOTE Request for Proposals notes that a monitoring and evaluation contract will be used "in lieu of USAID monitors, for security reasons."

While the use of contractors to conduct monitoring and evaluation—also known as third-party monitoring—is a common alternative method for conducting oversight, SIGAR has questions regarding its effectiveness in a contingency setting like Afghanistan. SIGAR plans to hold an expert panel¹⁵ on this issue in the coming months and will also initiate an audit next year on USAID's use of third-party monitors in Afghanistan.

Others have raised questions about how the coalition troop withdrawal and the accompanying decrease in donor funds for Afghanistan will affect Afghan women and girls. During a recent visit to Afghanistan, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights noted that there is widespread concern among civil-society groups that the momentum on advancing women's rights has halted and may be regressing. As the organization Human Rights Watch has said, "Many Afghans feel enormous anxiety as the 2014 deadline for withdrawing international combat forces from Afghanistan looms and warlords and other powerbrokers jockey for position....The Afghan government's failure to tackle discrimination and respond effectively to violence against women undermines the already perilous state of women's rights."¹⁶ Similarly, Clare Lockhart, Director of the Institute for State Effectiveness, has testified before Congress that "security for Afghan women to exercise their fundamental rights and protect their hard won gains will rest first and foremost on the fundamental pillar of security: Can the Afghan state defend its citizens from threats to state survival and to its citizens?"

The Interagency Gender Working Group at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul has identified a number of key transition-related threats. These include a resurgence of recidivist gender

¹⁵ An expert panel is a forum in which individuals with specific subject matter expertise come together to discuss a specific issue.

¹⁶ Human Rights Watch, "Human Rights in Afghanistan," online introduction, <http://www.hrw.org/asia/afghanistan>, accessed October 19, 2013.

politics; increased fracturing of women's coalitions; and diminished international leverage over the Afghan government, creating an environment in which Afghan officials may be less willing to make concessions to the international community and may eliminate or weaken reform and development initiatives currently supported by donor nations.

In the coming year, SIGAR will continue to focus attention on how the military withdrawal, the decline in donor resources, and the transition to Afghan governance and control of the ANSF will affect reconstruction, including efforts aimed at women and girls.

SIGAR's Recent Afghan National Security Forces-related Work

In addition to our work on Afghan women and girls, SIGAR has a large body of work focused on the ANSF. The majority of U.S. reconstruction funding in Afghanistan has been dedicated to equipping, basing, and training the ANSF, and the success of the overall reconstruction effort depends, in many ways, on the success of these initiatives. This quarter, SIGAR issued a number of new audit and inspection products related to the ANSF. These reports underscore some key issues that SIGAR has identified in earlier work. These include:

- The provision of direct assistance to the Afghan government without full assessing and/or mitigating financial management weaknesses
- The lack of an ANSF basing plan that takes into account future ANSF numbers
- The absence of strong accountability measures over supplies provided to the ANSF
- The failure to consistently exercise strong contract oversight and management

The U.S. Government Is Providing Direct Assistance to the Afghan Government without Fully Assessing and/or Mitigating Financial Management Weaknesses

This month, SIGAR issued an audit report on U.S. oversight of fuel purchases for the Afghan National Police (ANP).¹⁷ Since October 2011, the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A) has directly contributed \$26.8 million in U.S. funds to the Afghan government. It plans to directly contribute another \$1.2 billion over the next 5 years to the Afghan Ministry of Interior (MOI) for the purchase of fuel for the ANP.

CSTC-A's standard operating procedures require six steps be taken prior to the disbursement of direct contributions, including a risk assessment and steps to verify how direct contributions are spent. However, we could not find evidence that CSTC-A officials conducted the required risk assessment to determine MOI's readiness to assume all responsibilities for capacity development and stewardship of U.S. funds. While SIGAR did find one PowerPoint slide from CSTC-A referring to a risk assessment (which indicated that direct contributions for ANP fuel were rated as "high-risk"), CSTC-A officials could not provide any documentation or explanation for this rating and told us they did not have a plan to

¹⁷SIGAR Audit 14-1, *Afghan National Police Fuel Program: Concerted Efforts Needed to Strengthen Oversight of U.S. Funds*, October 2, 2013.

mitigate the risk. Despite the absence of an assessment or risk mitigation plan, CSTC-A has continued to provide direct funding to the MOI for ANP petroleum, oil, and lubricants (POL). I am pleased to note, however, that, in response to our audit report, CSTC-A concurred with our recommendation to perform the required risk assessments.

The findings in this recent report echo those from another report we issued in January of this year, in which we found that although limited assessments of the Afghan Ministry of Defense (MOD) and the ANA indicated that the MOD is not ready to assume sole responsibility for fuel purchases, CSTC-A was proceeding with plans to directly provide at least \$1 billion to the Afghan government between early 2013 and fiscal year 2018 for MOD to purchase its own fuel.¹⁸

Let me state very clearly that SIGAR does not oppose direct assistance. We recognize that it can help build ministerial capability and support aid recipients in tailoring program execution to specific and changing circumstances. Given Afghanistan's long-standing and well-documented extent of corruption, however, increasing the portion of aid delivered as direct assistance also increases the risk of undetected theft, corruption, and waste.

The United States and other international donors must establish mechanisms to protect direct assistance from corruption and ensure vigorous oversight of funds. Implementing agencies are the first line of defense against waste, fraud, and abuse. They must have clear bilateral agreements with strong provisions for oversight. Accordingly, direct assistance should be conditioned on the Afghan ministries not only meeting measureable outcomes, but also providing unfettered and timely access to their books and records, as well as to sites, offices, and staff of projects funded by U.S. assistance.

DOD Lacks an ANSF Basing Plan That Takes into Account Future ANSF Numbers

In January 2011, we released an audit report on DOD's planning for ANSF facilities.¹⁹ We found that despite considerable funding and large numbers of facilities being constructed, CSTC-A, which has responsibility for managing the construction of ANSF facilities, had not developed a long-range construction plan. The lack of a plan increased the risk of building facilities that did not meet ANSF needs. We recommended that CSTC-A develop a long-range planning document that incorporated, among other things, updated requirements and justification for all ANSF facilities to meet projected ANSF needs. CSTC-A did not fully concur with this recommendation, but noted that it could improve "the identification of future projects and better document its priorities."

¹⁸ SIGAR Audit 13-4, *Afghan National Army: Controls over Fuel for Vehicles, Generators, and Power Plans Need Strengthening to Prevent Fraud, Waste, and Abuse*, January 24, 2013.

¹⁹ SIGAR Audit 11-6, *Inadequate Planning for ANSF Facilities Increases Risks for \$11.4 Billion Program*, January 26, 2011.

Last year, we decided to revisit this important issue through a follow-on audit and, this quarter, released a new report on CSTC-A's planning for ANSF facilities.²⁰ We found some improvements. For example, the International Security Assistance Force Joint Command (IJC), to its credit, has established a process to review and analyze existing coalition facilities for transfer to the Afghan government. Through this process, the coalition has closed 235 facilities and transferred 352 to the ANSF, helping CSTC-A cancel 318 construction projects and reduce costs by approximately \$2 billion.

However, we also found that CSTC-A continues to lack a comprehensive basing plan for the ANSF. This is significant because current construction requirements do not take into account planned reductions in the number of ANSF from the currently approved 352,000 to the expected final troop strength of 228,500. As a result, ANSF facilities will have excess capacity, a problem we have identified in some of our inspections.²¹ Notably, IJC and CSTC-A officials informed us they do not track occupancy of existing ANSF facilities.

Excess capacity is not the only problem that the ANSF construction program faces. As discussed earlier in this statement, the U.S. government's ability to oversee projects will be severely diminished following the drawdown of U.S. and coalition forces in 2014, because increasingly large swaths of the country will be inaccessible to U.S. government personnel. Using CSTC-A's 2012 base construction schedule, SIGAR identified 52 projects that may not meet the December 2014 construction deadline. We are, therefore, concerned that these projects may not receive the level of scrutiny warranted to ensure that U.S. funds are safeguarded from waste, abuse, and fraud.

DOD Has Not Instituted Robust Controls over Supplies Provided to the ANSF

SIGAR's work this quarter also raises concerns about a lack of accountability over supplies provided to the ANSF, in particular vehicle spare parts for the ANA²² and petroleum, oil, and lubricants for the ANP.²³

In October 2012, the International Security Assistance Force Commander's Advisory and Assistance Team reported that CSTC-A could not account for about \$230 million worth of

²⁰ SIGAR Audit 13-18, *Afghan National Security Forces: Additional Action Needed to Reduce Waste in \$4.7 Billion Worth of Planned and Ongoing Construction*, September 13, 2013.

²¹ In a July 2-12 report, we found three Afghan Border Police Bases in Nangarhar province that were either unoccupied or were not being used for their intended purpose. (SIGAR Inspection 12-3, *Construction Deficiencies at Afghan Border Police Bases Put \$19 Million Investment at Risk*, July 30, 2013.) In a January 2013 report on the \$7.3 Imam Sahib Border Police Company Headquarters, we found that only 12 Afghan personnel were present at a facility built to accommodate up to 175. (SIGAR Inspection 13-5, *Imam Sahib Police Company Headquarters in Kunduz Province: \$7.3 Million Facility Sits Largely Unused*, January 29, 2013.)

²² SIGAR Audit 14-3, *Afghan National Army: Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan Lacks Key Information on Inventory in Stock and Requirements for Vehicle Spare Parts*, October 16, 2013.

²³ SIGAR Audit 14-1.

spare parts for the ANSF and, due to the lack of accountability for these spare parts, had ordered \$138 million of additional replacement parts. The team referred this matter to SIGAR and asked that we examine it further. We found that CSTC-A is placing orders for vehicle spare parts without accurate information on what parts are needed or are already in stock. Without accurate inventories, CSTC-A does not have data to justify the number of vehicle spare parts authorized or purchased for the ANA. Moreover, we found that while CSTC-A is able to track vehicle spare parts into Afghanistan for orders placed during the period 2010 through 2012, it could not document that the parts were transferred to the ANA.

In June 2013, as a result of our work, CSTC-A began implementing new procedures for incoming containers of vehicle spare parts. To accelerate transferring property to the ANA and to ensure that all vehicle spare parts remain in U.S. custody until title transfer has taken place, CSTC-A now plans to redirect all incoming vehicle spare parts containers to a U.S. transfer point prior to officially transferring them to the ANA. In addition, CSTC-A is attempting to repossess vehicle spare parts until the ANA can conduct an official inventory and transfer. These are positive developments, and we will continue to monitor CSTC-A's efforts to ensure greater accountability over vehicle spare parts.

As mentioned earlier, we recently issued a report on fuel purchases for the ANP. In addition to the concerns we raised in that report regarding direct contributions to the Afghan MOI to purchase fuel, we found that poor oversight and documentation of blanket purchase agreements and fuel purchases resulted in the use of higher-priced vendors and questionable costs to the U.S. government. In several instances, vendors charged fees for fuel deliveries that were not allowed under the blanket purchase agreements issued by the U.S. Central Command Joint Theater Support Contracting Command. In addition, the use of higher-priced vendors in Kabul Province resulted in almost \$1 million in additional costs from November 2012 through December 2012.

We also found that CSTC-A was not using fuel-consumption data to determine how much fuel to order for the ANP, increasing the likelihood that it would purchase more fuel than was needed. In fact, at one police station, CSTC-A ordered \$4.6 million worth of excess fuel. Finally, we found that CSTC-A overstated its funding estimates for ANP fuel by about \$94 million for fiscal year 2013, in large part because it does not know how much fuel the ANP actually consumes and, therefore, needs.

I am pleased to report that CSTC-A concurred with almost all of our recommendations in this report to strengthen accountability over fuel purchases for the ANP, and we will continue to urge CSTC-A to implement all of our recommendations.

DOD Has Not Consistently Exercised Strong Contract Oversight or Management

One of the most common and continuing problems identified in our work is poor contract oversight and management, especially of construction projects. This quarter, we issued three inspection reports on facilities constructed with funds managed, in part, by DOD.

- One inspection was of the Justice Center in Parwan (JCIP) complex, designed to provide a secure facility for transferring Afghan combatants from U.S. military custody into the Afghan criminal justice system. We found that construction of the JCIP courthouse had not been completed and the workmanship of the construction done to date was poor. For example, we observed numerous cracks in the concrete, incomplete pours of concrete, and rebar bound with wire instead of being welded, which could lead to structural failure. We also found that oversight of the construction project was not conducted as required. For example, we found no evidence that the project's contracting officer representative conducted monthly reviews or submitted the required reports. In June 2013, DOD notified the contractor that the JCIP courthouse contract was being terminated for convenience, which gives the U.S. government the right to terminate a contract without cause. At the time, the contractor had been paid \$396,000. Because the contract was terminated for convenience rather than default, the contractor could have requested the amount remaining on the contract—about \$2.2 million. A draft of our inspection report recommended reviewing this decision and taking action to address the contractor's failure to complete the project. I am pleased to report that, on October 3, 2013, DOD rescinded the contract's termination for convenience and issued a termination for default.
- Another recent SIGAR inspection was of an ANP District Police Headquarters in Archi, Afghanistan. We found that force-protection measures—such as the perimeter walls and guard towers—built under a March 2008 contract between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Afghanistan Engineer District-North and Swiz Hewadwal Joint Venture appeared well constructed. However, we were unable to determine whether they had been built in accordance with contract requirements and applicable construction standards, because USACE officials could not locate the project's construction files, including important documents such as the contract's technical specifications and requirements. Moreover, while additional buildings had been constructed on the site, neither USACE nor CSTC-A officials knew who built these additional buildings, when they were built, or how much they cost. We also found that the Archi District Police Headquarters facilities were in a state of disrepair, with an estimated 40 ANP personnel living and working in facilities with extensive mold growing on the interior walls and ceilings of the barracks and bathrooms.
- Finally this quarter, we released an inspection report on a medical clinic in Walayatti, Afghanistan, paid for with Commander's Emergency Response Program funds. We

found that none of the three structures constructed for the clinic was constructed according to the design specifications. As with the Archi District Police Headquarters, we found that critical documents were missing from the project's files, such as approvals of deviations from contract specifications and documentation of project oversight. The project's files also contained no documentation of the facilities' transfer to the Afghan government after construction was completed. Indeed, we found that the clinic was empty and had never been used.

Conclusion

As the members of this Subcommittee are well aware, we have entered a critical time in the effort to rebuild Afghanistan. So much depends on whether the coalition's attempt to build a strong, stable, and capable ANSF succeeds, and the stakes could not be higher for Afghan women and girls.

In the coming year, SIGAR will continue to focus on U.S.-funded programs to strengthen the ANSF. We also look forward to informing Congress, and especially members of this Subcommittee, on the results of our audits addressing the U.S. government's efforts to support women and girls in Afghanistan.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I will be pleased to answer any of your questions.

John F. Sopko
Special Inspector General

John F. Sopko was sworn in as Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction on July 2, 2012. Mr. Sopko, appointed to the post by President Obama, has more than 30 years of experience in oversight and investigations as a prosecutor, congressional counsel and senior federal government advisor.

Mr. Sopko came to SIGAR from Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP, an international law firm headquartered in Washington, D.C., where he had been a partner since 2009.

Mr. Sopko's government experience includes over 20 years on Capitol Hill, where he held key positions in both the Senate and House of Representatives. He served on the staffs of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, the Select Committee on Homeland Security and the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations.

In his most recent congressional post, Mr. Sopko was Chief Counsel for Oversight and Investigations for the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, chaired by Rep. John D. Dingell (D-Mich.), during the 110th Congress. There, he supervised several investigations focused on matters regulated by the Food and Drug Administration, Department of Energy, Department of Commerce, Federal Communications Commission, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission and Consumer Product Safety Commission.

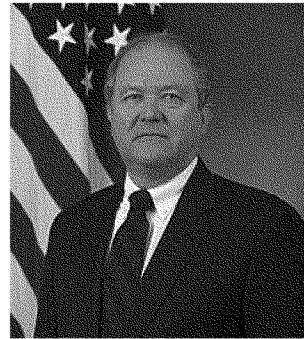
Mr. Sopko also served as General Counsel and Chief Oversight Counsel for the House Select Committee on Homeland Security, where he focused on homeland security and counter-terrorism investigations and issues.

At the Senate Subcommittee on Investigations, chaired by then-Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), Mr. Sopko conducted investigations on a broad range of issues, from healthcare insurance to complex weapons systems. From 1982 to 1997, Mr. Sopko led investigations for the chairman and subcommittee members that included a multi-year investigation related to health insurance; union infiltration by organized crime; protection of critical infrastructure; the potential spread of weapons of mass destruction in the former Soviet Union and elsewhere; enforcement of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act; cybersecurity; international drug interdiction programs; counter-terrorism policies and procedures; government procurement fraud and the illegal export of dual-use technologies.

After his work in the Senate, Mr. Sopko was recruited by the Commerce Secretary to manage the department's response to multiple congressional, grand jury and press inquiries. While at the Commerce Department, Mr. Sopko was named Deputy Assistant Secretary for Enforcement for the Bureau of Export Administration, and Deputy Assistant Secretary for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

Mr. Sopko previously served as a state and federal prosecutor. As a trial attorney with the U.S. Department of Justice Organized Crime and Racketeering Section, he conducted numerous long-term grand jury investigations and prosecutions against organized crime groups. He was the lead attorney in the first successful federal RICO prosecution of the entire leadership structure of an American La Cosa Nostra crime family. In 1982 he received the Justice Department's Special Commendation Award for Outstanding Service to the Criminal Division, and in 1980 he received the department's Special Achievement Award for Sustained Superior Performance.

Mr. Sopko began his professional career as a state prosecutor in Dayton, Ohio, with the Montgomery County prosecutor's office. He served as an adjunct professor at American University's School of Justice, where he received the Outstanding Adjunct Faculty Teaching Award in 1984 and the Professor of the Year Award in 1986. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1974, and his law degree from Case Western University School of Law in 1977. He is a member of the bars of Ohio and the District of Columbia.



Prepared Testimony

House Armed Services Committee

“Challenges to Securing Afghan Women’s Gains in a Post-2014 Environment”

Michelle Barsa
Senior Manager for Policy, Inclusive Security

Tuesday, 29 October 2013

Introduction

Chairman Roby, Ranking Member Tsongas, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me here today. I’d also like to thank you for the continued support you have shown for Afghan women, particularly on the issue which I’ll testify to – the recruitment and retention of women in the Afghan National Security Forces.

The nongovernmental organization I work with – Inclusive Security – is dedicated to increasing the inclusion of women in peace and security processes. We’ve worked in Afghanistan with Afghan women leaders for more than a decade. Traveling to Afghanistan regularly, we collaborate with local organizations to train women in political participation, inclusion in the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program, and security sector development. We also host delegations of Afghan women in Washington, facilitating meetings with members of Congress and the Administration for discussion of how to advance peace and security in their country. Informing today’s testimony are consultations I’ve led in country with women and men in the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), officials in the Afghan Ministries of Interior and Defense, and representatives of the International Security Assistance Force, among others.

The strides Afghan women have made since 2001 are many. Gains have been made in access to public services, justice, and political participation that have had a real and tangible impact on Afghan women’s quality of life. But, as U.S. and Coalition forces draw down, what I’ve observed is this – it’s no longer a question of whether the security transition will have a negative impact on women, it’s a question of how to mitigate the backsliding we’ve already seen. In many provinces, limitations on women’s freedom of movement are re-emerging, as well as restrictions on their participation in public life.¹

In determining how to maintain progress for women, we must evaluate women’s direct participation in the institutions mandated to protect these gains – chief among them, the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP).

¹ See AWN-CORDAID report for additional information on the impact of transition on women’s security: <http://www.cordaid.org/nl/publicaties/afghanistan-monitoring-womens-security-transition/>

In total, the U.S. has appropriated \$52.8 billion through the Afghan Security Forces Fund to support the ANSF.² Prior to 2013, there had never been authorizing or appropriation language in law that specifically addressed recruitment and retention of women in the Afghan forces. It's time for a change. It's time for a new approach – one that equally engages men and women in ensuring the endurance of these hard-won advancements.

The presence – or absence – of women in the ANSF has implications in areas the U.S. has deemed top priorities including: democracy promotion, countering terrorism, and provision of security to the Afghan people with minimal or no assistance from Coalition forces³; particularly as we understand “Afghan people” to refer equally to men, women, boys and girls.

Allow me to elaborate briefly on these three points:

- **Democracy promotion:** Without female security personnel, Afghan women will not be allowed to vote. The political transition will be defined, in part, by the extent to which elections are free, fair, and accessible to all. The majority of voter registration and polling stations are sex-segregated, and voters are subject to a body search before entering. An Air Force Colonel told me, “If there is no female searcher at a given voting station, that station will be effectively closed to women due to the security risk presented.” Female security officers are required to staff the women-only stations. In the absence of sufficient numbers of female security personnel, women-only voter registration and polling stations remain closed.
- **Counterterrorism:** Last year in Afghanistan, on at least 13 recorded instances, male insurgents dressed as women entered restricted areas from which they've launched attacks. There were no female body searchers to stop them. Due to prohibitive cultural norms, male security officers cannot conduct body searches of women, security checks of homes that have a female present, nor effectively gather information from or conduct interrogations of females. Units that include females not only expand female search capabilities, but also improve the operational effectiveness of that force and bolster its credibility by enabling adherence to cultural values.
- **Local Security Protections:** Sexual and gender-based violence is endemic in Afghanistan: as many as 87 percent⁴ of Afghan women experience some form of domestic abuse or forced marriage. Cultural norms prohibit or limit communication between unrelated men and women including between a woman experiencing abuse and a male police officer. In cases where women report these crimes to male police, they're often blamed for the abuse or worse, abused by the officer. With female police officers, these crimes are more likely to be properly registered, investigated, and prosecuted.

Women in the forces have proven more effective than men at engaging civilians on issues that extend far beyond sexual and gender-based violence. Effective engagement allows for a better understanding of community needs, localized security threats, and options for

² SIGAR, Report to United States Congress, (30 July 2013).

³ DOD response to SIGAR March 25 Inquiry

⁴ Global Rights, “Living with Violence: A National Report on Domestic Abuse in Afghanistan”, (March 2008): 3.

response. This yields particular benefits when the ANA is called to respond to natural disasters or distribute humanitarian aid.

Challenges to Recruitment and Retention

Of the myriad institutional and social impediments to recruitment and retention in the Afghan security forces, I'll highlight a select few of priority concern to women:

- 1) Recruitment process: Women have reported ANP recruitment officers turning them away, heckling them as bad women, and asking for sexual favors in exchange for enrollment. Within the ANA, there have been complaints of undue testing delays preventing women from entering training required for initiation of service.
- 2) Assignment and rank promotion: In some areas, women report being assigned to positions below their ranks – including officers serving in positions reserved for non-commissioned officers and soldiers relegated to carrying out menial tasks such as cleaning the office or serving tea. Policewomen are regularly denied rank promotions and career advancement opportunities, or will receive their rank promotions without the accordant increase in policing responsibilities.⁵
- 3) Equipment and transportation: Women have reported not being assigned weapons, despite being trained in how to use them. They report never receiving uniforms or being issued uniforms made for men. Further, women officers staffing Family Response Units report having rare access to vehicles, limiting their ability to investigate crimes, respond to ongoing incidents, and conduct outreach to communities.⁶
- 4) Sexual harassment: Complaints of sexual harassment, assault, and coercion within the forces are widespread. The existing complaints response mechanism has proven ineffective in addressing abuse and holding perpetrators accountable.
- 5) Public perceptions of police women: While surveys show that communities are increasingly supportive of policewomen⁷, families are still reluctant to encourage or allow female members to serve. This is partially attributable to conservative cultural norms but also a direct result of the rampant sexual harassment and assault within the forces and lack of female-only facilities which lead to rumors of prostitution and un-Islamic behavior.
- 6) Inadequate facilities: Twenty-nine of the 30 police training centers do not have dormitories for women. Without appropriate facilities, women trainees need to travel home each night, which effectively limits enrollment to women in the immediate vicinity of the training center. Some insist there must be a critical mass of female recruits to warrant construction of the women-only dormitories. I'd suggest, if you build it, they will come.

⁵ Oxfam, "Women and the Afghan Police", (173 Oxfam Briefing Paper, September 2013): 23.

⁶ Oxfam, "Women and the Afghan Police": 24.

⁷ Heinrich Boll Stiftung – Afghanistan, "Women's Perceptions of the Afghan National Police", (2011); and Oxfam, "Women and the Afghan Police".

A Path Forward

We have targets but we're not on track to meet them. The Afghan government set a goal of retaining 5,000 women in the ANP by 2014⁸. Right now, there are approximately 1,490 women in the ANP, comprising nearly one percent of the total force. The ANA has ambitiously stated they'd like to see 10 percent of its force comprised by women; currently there are 426 women in the ANA, which is just under .2 percent of the total force size⁹ (though it's worth noting that number now includes female commandos serving as ANA Special Operators).

We have not made enough progress toward goals set for recruitment and retention of women in the ANSF. This is partially attributable to the environment, but also to an under-resourced effort. With an eye toward ensuring the national security forces serve all Afghan citizens – men and women – and an understanding that female presence will improve force effectiveness, the U.S. and its allies must reinvigorate efforts to reduce institutional barriers to women's participation and increase female representation in both the ANA and ANP.

We are grateful Congress has already taken steps to support these goals. The National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2013 – specifically Sections 1214 and 1223 – emphasizes the importance of recruitment and retention of women in the ANSF. In addition, the House version of the NDAA for FY 2014, as well as its version of the FY 2014 Defense Appropriations bill specifically authorize and appropriate, respectively, \$47.3 million for the recruitment and retention of women in the ANSF. I am pleased that the Senate Appropriations Committee's version of the FY 2014 Defense Appropriations bill also includes specific funding for this use.

With many competing priorities, efforts to support women in the ANSF will be sidelined if money is not specifically reserved for these purposes.

To clarify, reserving funds specifically for women doesn't imply adding another line of effort to train and assist the ANSF. To effectively *integrate* women into the forces, interventions designed to recruit and retain women must be integrated into current U.S. efforts to support the ANSF under the primary funding categories of sustainment, infrastructure, equipment and transportation, training and operations. Making small modifications to the ongoing activities within each of those areas, we can create an environment within the forces that is less hostile to women. A safer work environment coupled with targeted recruitment campaigns will sustain, if not expand, female presence within the forces post-2014.

Allocating Resources

- 1) Sustainment
 - a. Develop and expand female-targeted recruitment campaigns including commercials, seminars, open house events, and pamphlets detailing the different career paths within the ANA and ANP.

⁸ The Afghan government set forth targets in recruitment plans issued by the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense, including the Directive on Female Recruiting (2009), National Police Plan (2010), and National Police Strategy (2011).

⁹ SIGAR, Report to United States Congress, (30 July 2013).

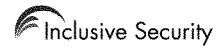
- b. Support supplemental training for career progression within the ANA and ANP including driving courses, computer training, and language training.
 - c. Increase contact between police and communities to cultivate an understanding of the role women play within the ANP.
- 2) Infrastructure
 - a. Construct bathrooms, prayer rooms, and other facilities specifically dedicated for females on existing bases.
 - b. Refurbish training facilities with additional security infrastructure including female search buildings at gates, security cameras, and building repairs at possible security breach locations.
 - c. Build housing and childcare facilities on large garrison installations where women will be posted.
- 3) Equipment and Transportation
 - a. Provide appropriately-sized boots, winter coats, gloves, jackets, and uniforms.
- 4) Training and Operations
 - a. Expand accelerated literacy training for women with additional facilities, teachers, and associated materials.
 - b. Provide small grants to female entrepreneurs to establish childcare operations in training locations.
 - c. Contract teachers and associated material for annual training of every ANP unit at the district level and above and every ANA unit to the battalion level in women's inclusion in the forces as a component of improving operational effectiveness, elimination of violence against women, and mitigation of trafficking in persons.
 - d. Build the capacity of female officers to staff and lead the ANP Family Response Units (established to address reports of sexual and gender-based violence).
 - e. Accommodate participation of senior ANSF female personnel (O-5 and above) at international conferences, symposia, and workshops to hone nascent leadership skills and observe female army and police counterparts in other Muslim states.

These are just a few options for allocating resources. Both the Afghan Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense have Human Rights and Gender Integration Directorates with recently revised strategic plans. These funds can and should be guided by the objectives and actions outlined in each.

The bottom line is that Afghan women know what they need. Whether through consultation in the ministries, ANSF, or civil society, Afghan women should be our primary source of information in determining next steps.

Conclusion

Without question, Afghan women have experienced improvements in access to health care, education, economic opportunity, and political power since the fall of the Taliban in 2001. They weren't handed progress; they fought for it. They founded social service organizations, ran for political office, advocated to official actors, and did the impossible work of holding communities



together in the midst of war. As we question how to maintain gains post-2014, our answers must include positioning women themselves to protect what they've fought so hard to achieve. We must acknowledge Afghan women's interest in serving their communities and their country – and for those who want to serve in the armed forces, it's our obligation to ensure they can.

Biography

Michelle Barsa

**Senior Manager for Policy
Inclusive Security Action**

Michelle Barsa is Senior Manager for Policy at Inclusive Security, focusing on expanding the roles for women in peace and security processes globally. In addition to advising on broader US foreign policy related to women, peace, and security, she leads Inclusive Security's work in Afghanistan and supports Middle East programming with a focus on Syria. In these conflict focal areas, she promotes women's active participation in political reconciliation, reintegration, and political transition processes. Besides regularly consulting the US government, United Nations, and NATO on these issues, she has also designed and led training for US military forces and civilian professionals deployed to serve in combat support missions abroad.

Previously, Ms. Barsa worked in Afghanistan as an emergency program manager with Catholic Relief Services. Prior to that, she worked in CRS's Jerusalem, West Bank, and Gaza office and for the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Sudan. She holds a master's in gender and conflict from The Fletcher School at Tufts University and a bachelor's in finance and philosophy from Boston College.

**DISCLOSURE FORM FOR WITNESSES
CONCERNING FEDERAL CONTRACT AND GRANT INFORMATION**

INSTRUCTION TO WITNESSES: Rule 11, clause 2(g)(5), of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives for the 113th Congress requires nongovernmental witnesses appearing before House committees to include in their written statements a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source of any federal contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants) received during the current and two previous fiscal years either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness. This form is intended to assist witnesses appearing before the House Committee on Armed Services in complying with the House rule. Please note that a copy of these statements, with appropriate redactions to protect the witness's personal privacy (including home address and phone number) will be made publicly available in electronic form not later than one day after the witness's appearance before the committee.

Witness name: Michelle Barsa

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)

☐ Individual

☒ Representative

If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the company, association or other entity being represented: Inclusive Security Action

FISCAL YEAR 2013

federal grant(s)/ contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
N/A			

FISCAL YEAR 2012

federal grant(s)/ contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
N/A			

FISCAL YEAR 2011

Federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
N/A			

Federal Contract Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts (including subcontracts) with the federal government, please provide the following information:

Number of contracts (including subcontracts) with the federal government:

Current fiscal year (2013): ____ 0 _____;
 Fiscal year 2012: ____ 0 _____;
 Fiscal year 2011: ____ 0 _____.

Federal agencies with which federal contracts are held:

Current fiscal year (2013): ____ 0 _____;
 Fiscal year 2012: ____ 0 _____;
 Fiscal year 2011: ____ 0 _____.

List of subjects of federal contract(s) (for example, ship construction, aircraft parts manufacturing, software design, force structure consultant, architecture & engineering services, etc.):

Current fiscal year (2013): ____ 0 _____;
 Fiscal year 2012: ____ 0 _____;
 Fiscal year 2011: ____ 0 _____.

Aggregate dollar value of federal contracts held:

Current fiscal year (2013): ____ 0 _____;
 Fiscal year 2012: ____ 0 _____;
 Fiscal year 2011: ____ 0 _____.

Federal Grant Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has grants (including subgrants) with the federal government, please provide the following information:

Number of grants (including subgrants) with the federal government:

Current fiscal year (2013): ____0____;
 Fiscal year 2012: ____0____;
 Fiscal year 2011: ____0____.

Federal agencies with which federal grants are held:

Current fiscal year (2013): ____0____;
 Fiscal year 2012: ____0____;
 Fiscal year 2011: ____0____.

List of subjects of federal grants(s) (for example, materials research, sociological study, software design, etc.):

Current fiscal year (2013): ____0____;
 Fiscal year 2012: ____0____;
 Fiscal year 2011: ____0____.

Aggregate dollar value of federal grants held:

Current fiscal year (2013): ____0____;
 Fiscal year 2012: ____0____;
 Fiscal year 2011: ____0____.



Testimony of Kenneth Katzman, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs, Congressional Research Service

House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee

“Report from SIGAR: Challenges to Securing Afghan Women’s Gains in a Post-2014 Environment”

October 29, 2013

I would like to thank the Subcommittee, Chairman Roby, and Ranking Member Tsongas, for asking the Congressional Research Service for my testimony today. I will summarize my testimony and ask that the full text be included in the record, and I look forward to your questions.

My work on Afghanistan for the Congressional Research Service focuses extensively on Afghan politics, culture, and the human rights situation. This testimony is based primarily on the many conversations on this issue that I’ve had since 2001 with U.S. officials, Afghan officials, members of Afghan civil society including women’s groups, allied government officials, journalists, U.S. military personnel, and academics, including conversations in the course of several visits there since 2004.

Background

Many experts measure gains for Afghan women relative to the situation for women during the Taliban regime of 1996-2001. It is well known that that regime basically forbade girls from going to school and women from working outside the home. Wearing of the *burqa* (all-body covering) in public was mandatory, and the officers of the Taliban’s “Ministry of Preventing Vice and Supporting Virtue” regularly beat women who were not completely covered from head to toe, or committed other designated “offenses” in public. The Taliban regime often used the soccer stadium in Kabul to conduct public executions of women who were convicted of adultery or other “crimes.” On the other hand, some argue that Taliban policies did not differ very substantially from how women were already being treated by clans, tribes, and families in the conservative, rural areas of Afghanistan. According to this view, the Taliban’s difference from past Afghan administrations was mainly the degree to which it enforced these practices and extended them into the major cities, particularly Kabul.

The situation for women during the Taliban regime contrasted sharply with that observed in earlier periods, particularly the era of the Soviet occupation (1979-89). During the Soviet occupation, Afghan Communist party leaders ran the country and there were few, if any, official limitations on women’s rights, although areas outside Soviet/Afghan government control saw substantial adherence to Islamic customs.

Although the focus of U.S. policy toward Afghanistan later shifted to Al Qaeda's presence there, the thrust of U.S. criticism of the Taliban regime during 1996-98 was focused on its treatment of women. In part because of the Taliban's denial of women's rights, the United States withheld recognition of the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan, formally recognizing no faction as the government. The United Nations continued to seat representatives of the government of Burhanuddin Rabbani, which was ousted from Kabul by the Taliban in 1996. U.N. Security Council Resolution 1193 (August 28, 1998) and 1214 (December 8, 1998) urged the Taliban to end discrimination against women. In May 1999, the Senate-passed S.Res. 68, calling on the President not to recognize an Afghan government that oppresses women. Later, after the August 1998 bombings of two U.S. embassies in Africa, the Taliban's hosting of Al Qaeda's leadership became the Clinton Administration's overriding priority for Afghanistan. Still, after that time, the Administration continued to criticize the Taliban's treatment of women.

Overview on Human Rights

Afghanistan remains a traditional society. U.S. efforts since 2001 to build capacity in human rights institutions in Afghanistan and to promote civil society and political participation have collided with traditional attitudes and practices that resist change. Like previous years' State Department human rights reports, the report on Afghanistan for 2012 analyzed numerous human rights deficiencies, attributing most of them to overall lack of security, loose control over the actions of Afghan security forces, pervasive corruption, and cultural attitudes including discrimination against women.¹

One of the institutional human rights developments since the fall of the Taliban has been the establishment of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC). It is headed by a woman, Sima Samar, a Hazara Shiite from Ghazni Province. (Hazaras constitute about 10% of the population.) It acts as an oversight body over the government's adherence to international standards of human rights practices, but its members are appointed by the government. Some assert that it is not aggressive or independent enough in addressing human rights issues. At a meeting of senior officials of donor countries on July 3, 2013, participants criticized several of Karzai's recent appointments to the AIHRC. Some reportedly are linked to Afghan faction leaders or have otherwise not demonstrated a commitment to upholding or enforcing international standards of human rights.² On a visit to Afghanistan in September 2013, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Navinathem Pillay failed to persuade Karzai to replace the controversial AIHRC appointees.

Counterbalancing the influence of post-Taliban modern institutions such as the AIHRC are traditional bodies such as the National Ulama Council. The Council consists of the 150 most respected and widely followed clerics throughout Afghanistan. It has taken conservative positions on free expression and social freedoms, such as the type of television and other media programs available on private media outlets. For example, it has succeeded in limiting the broadcast of risqué soap operas produced in Turkey and the showing of some of India's Bollywood movies in cinemas. Clerics sometimes ban performances by any Afghan entertainer, but particularly females, whose dress or acts the clerics consider inconsistent with conservative Islamic values. Because of the power of Islamist conservatives, alcohol is increasingly difficult to obtain in restaurants and stores, although it is not banned for sale to non-Muslims. On the other hand, some foreign rock bands have been allowed to perform high-profile shows since 2011, suggesting that modernizing elements in Afghanistan are still able, to some extent, to lead Western-oriented lifestyles.

¹ Department of State. Human Rights Report for 2012: Afghanistan, April 19, 2013. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2012&dlid=204393#wrapper>.

² Ron Nordland, "Donors Are Likely to Ask Karzai to Rethink Rights Panel Choices," *New York Times*, July 3, 2013.

Gains of Women and Girls Since 2001

Women and women's groups are a large component of the burgeoning of civil society in post-Taliban Afghanistan. Freedoms for women, particularly in urban areas, have greatly expanded since the fall of the Taliban with their elections to the parliament and their service at many levels of government. The major institutional development since 2001 was the formation in 2002 of a Ministry of Women's Affairs dedicated to improving women's rights. It has been headed by a woman who served during the Communist era, Hush Banu Ghazanfar, since 2007. The primary function of the ministry is to promote public awareness of relevant laws and regulations concerning women's rights. It plays a key role in trying to protect women from domestic abuse (there are 11 women's shelters across Afghanistan, with a total of 29 such shelters planned). Women's rights groups in Afghanistan expressed outrage over a June 2012 statement by Afghanistan's justice minister that the shelters encourage "immorality and prostitution," although that assertion continues to be put forward by various Afghan clerics and other Islamic conservatives. The ministry has been funded by donors, including the United States.

There has also been a large expansion in the number of civil society groups operating in Afghanistan since 2001, many of them focused on advocating for the rights of women. One of the most prominent civil society groups operating in post-Taliban Afghanistan is the Afghanistan Women's Network. It has at least 3,000 members and its leaders say that 75 nongovernmental organizations work under its auspices. In addition, the AIHRC and outside Afghan human rights groups focus extensively on rights for Afghan women.

In the workforce, women are performing jobs that were rarely held by women even before the Taliban came to power in 1996, including in the new police force. The first female Afghan pilots arrived for training in the United States in July 2011. There are over 200 female judges and nearly 500 female journalists working nationwide. Women are legally permitted to drive, and press reports say that an increasing number of Afghan women, mainly in Kabul and other cities, are exercising that privilege. The wearing of the *burqa* is no longer obligatory, and fewer women reportedly are wearing it than was the case a few years ago. In November 2010, the government opened a USAID-funded women-only park in Kabul called "Women's Garden" where women can go, without a male escort, and undertake fitness and job training activities.

Women in Key Positions

Women have moved into prominent positions in all areas of Afghan governance, despite periodic setbacks. Since 2004, there have generally been three female ministers in Karzai's cabinet. Afghanistan has one female ambassador and Karzai has a female deputy chief of staff, Homaira Ludin-Etemadi. In March 2005, Karzai appointed a former minister of women's affairs, Habiba Sohrabi, as governor of Bamiyan province, inhabited mostly by Hazaras. Sohrabi is currently a vice presidential nominee on the presidential slate of former Foreign Minister Zalmay Rasoul running in the April 5, 2014 presidential election. There are a growing number of female judges and prosecutors in Afghanistan's provinces, and a female judge on a counternarcotics tribunal in Kabul. In the December 16, 2009, cabinet nomination process, Karzai proposed a woman to head a new Ministry of Literacy, but parliament did not vote on this nomination because it had not previously acted to approve formation of the ministry.

One woman (Masooda Jalal) ran in the 2004 presidential election, and two ran for president in the August 20, 2009, election. In the latter, each received less than one-half of 1% of the vote. One woman, Khadija Ghaznawi, filed to run in the April 5, 2014 presidential election. However, her candidacy was denied on October 22, 2013 by the Independent Election Commission—as were those of 15 males of the 26 total candidates who registered. Candidates were disqualified primarily on the grounds of insufficient signatures of endorsement (100,000 were required), problems with documentation, and/or insufficient education. It is not clear what specific grounds were cited to deny Ghaznawi's candidacy. Disqualified

candidates have 20 days to appeal their disqualification before the final list of candidates is published on November 16, 2013. Well-known female parliamentarian Fawzia Koofi, a Tajik, had indicated during most of 2013 that she might run for president in 2014 but she did not file a candidacy.

In the National Assembly, the constitution reserves for women at least 17 of the 102 seats in the upper house and 68 of the 249 seats in the lower house of parliament. There were 69 women elected in the 2010 parliamentary elections, one more than the quota. (400 women ran for those seats—about 16% of all candidates.) The target ratio is ensured by reserving an average of two seats per province (34 provinces) for women—the top two female vote getters per province. (Kabul province reserves nine seats for women.) There are 28 women in the upper house, substantially more than the guaranteed minimum. In the lower house, a prominent female parliamentarian, Shukria Barekzai, was chair of the Defense Committee during 2011.

About 300 women were delegates to the 1,600-person “*peace jirga*” that was held during June 2–4, 2010, which endorsed an Afghan plan to reintegrate Taliban insurgents who want to end their fight. The High Peace Council that was established in 2010 to oversee the reconciliation process with Taliban leaders has nine women out of 70 members, although these women report that their views are not taken into account to any significant extent in the Council.³ At the urging of the United States and other countries, a woman was part of the official Afghan delegation to the major international conference on Afghanistan in Bonn on December 5, 2011; she was selected at a meeting of civil society activists in Bonn, a day before the major conference began.

Frequent Setbacks for Women’s Rights and Freedoms

These positive developments often clash with traditional attitudes, particularly in the rural areas. It is in these areas that Taliban insurgents have some influence, if not outright control, and where male-dominated traditions remain strong. Human Rights Watch, among other organizations, has been reporting backsliding on women’s rights since 2008.⁴ Numerous abuses, such as denial of educational and employment opportunities, continue primarily because of Afghanistan’s conservative traditions.

Among the most widespread abuses reported by the State Department and human rights organizations:

- More than 70% of marriages in Afghanistan are forced, despite laws banning the practice, and a majority of brides are younger than the legal marriage age of 16.
- The practice of *baad*, in which women and girls are given away to marry someone from another clan to settle a dispute, remains prevalent.
- There is no law specifically banning sexual harassment, and women are routinely jailed for *zina*—a term meaning adultery, and a crime under the penal code. This charge can encompass many different activities, including running away from home, defying family choice of a spouse, eloping, or fleeing domestic violence. The penal code is often relatively lenient toward males—a man convicted of “honor killing” of a wife who allegedly commits adultery cannot be sentenced to more than two years in prison. One case that received substantial attention in December 2011 involved a woman who was jailed for having a child outside wedlock even though the child was a product of rape.
- Women’s rights activists and other prominent women have been assassinated. Several female police commanders have been killed by varying assailants. On December 10,

³ Author conversations with Afghan officials and experts on Afghanistan. 2013.

⁴ “We Have the Promises of the World: Women’s Rights in Afghanistan,” *Human Rights Watch*, December 2009, http://www.wluml.org/sites/wluml.org/files/hrw_report_2009.pdf.

2012, the head of the Women's Affairs Ministry department in Laghman Province was gunned down. Her predecessor in that post was killed by a bomb planted in her car four months earlier. In September 2013, a female member of the Afghan parliament was kidnapped and a prominent women's rights activist and author, Sushmita Banerjee, a citizen of India, was abducted by Taliban militants from her home in Paktika province and found killed. Two Taliban suspects were subsequently arrested for the Banerjee killing.

- There is widespread reporting of security forces' involvement and complicity in trafficking of women and children, as well as rape. After being listed for four consecutive years in the annual State Department "Trafficking in Persons" reports as "Tier 2: Watch List," Afghanistan is at risk next year of automatic demotion to Tier 3, the worst level. That level could trigger economic sanctions against Afghanistan, but Afghanistan could avoid that ranking if it demonstrates that it is making efforts to comply with international standards on this issue.

Legal Framework and Political Obstacles

The Afghan government has accepted legally binding commitments. As of March 5, 2003, Afghanistan has been a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW is the only multilateral treaty that specifically focuses on the comprehensive rights of women. It calls on all parties to eliminate discrimination against women in all areas of life, including healthcare, education, employment, domestic relations, law, and political participation. The Afghan government asserts that it pursues a policy of promoting equality for women under its ten-year National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA), drafted in May 2005. The Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework of July 2012, reached between the Afghan government and major donor countries, required Afghanistan to implement the NAPWA and all of its past commitments and laws to strengthen the rights of women and provide services to them.

Despite the Afghan government's general compliance with these commitments, Afghan culture and politics have also rolled back or limited the gains of women. In an effort to implement Afghanistan's commitments, on August 6, 2009, Karzai issued, as a decree, the "Elimination of Violence Against Women" (EVAW) law that makes the practices such as forced marriages and *baad* unlawful. A "High Commission for the Elimination of Violence Against Women" has been established to oversee implementation of the EVAW decree. However, enforcement of the EVAW decree has been weakened by some Supreme Court rulings and a reluctance among many Afghans to trust the Afghan legal system enough to use it regularly. Only a small percentage of reports of violence against women are registered with the judicial system, and about one-third of those proceed to trial.⁵ The number of women jailed for "moral crimes" has increased by 50% since 2011. A December 2010 attempt by the National Assembly to enact the EVAW into law failed, as did a more recent effort in May 2013. The legislative efforts have failed due to opposition from Islamic conservatives and others who say they do not want to limit the ability of male elders to decide family issues. One instrumental figure in blocking the enactment was parliamentarian Abdi Rab Rasul Sayyaf, a former *mujahedin* commander who belongs to the Wahhabi school of Islam that is prominent in Saudi Arabia. On May 22, 2013, about 200 male Islamist students demonstrated in Kabul demanding repeal of the EVAW decree outright. On the other hand, a U.N. report of March 5, 2013 said that prosecutions of abuses against women are increasingly obtaining convictions.⁶

⁵ Alissa Rubin, "Slow Gains in Justice for Afghan Women," *New York Times*, December 12, 2012.

⁶ <http://unama.unmissions.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=Qy9mDfEa5Rw%3d&tabid=12254&language=en-US>.

As an example of the influence of Afghanistan's conservative Islamic institutions, on March 2, 2012, the Ulema Council issued a pronouncement saying women should be forced to wear the veil and be forbidden from traveling without a male chaperone. The pronouncement did reiterate support for the rights of women to inherit and own property, and to choose their marital partners. On March 6, 2012, President Hamid Karzai—who has backed all the institutional women's rights developments discussed above—endorsed the Ulema Council statement. This demonstrates that even those in the Afghan government who favor modernization tend to avoid defying powerful religious figures. Karzai's wife, Zenat, is a prominent Afghan woman and a practicing gynecologist.

U.S. and International Posture on Women's Rights

U.S. officials say that U.S. policy is to promote women's rights in Afghanistan rigorously. The Administration has followed its "Strategy for Assistance to Women in Afghanistan, 2010-2013," consisting of funding programs that promote gender equality.⁷ Specific earmarks for use of U.S. funds for women's and girls' programs in Afghanistan are contained in recent annual appropriations, and these earmarks have grown steadily. The United States provided \$159 million to programs for Afghan women in FY2009, slightly more than the \$150 million earmarked, and about \$225 million for FY2010, more than the \$175 million earmarked.⁸ Total U.S. funding for women's programs for Afghanistan were similar for FY2011, FY2012, and FY2013. Among the funding streams has been U.S. Ambassador small grants to support gender equality (FY2009-FY2012), which were used to help finance over 830,000 microloans to women during 2004-2011 for the establishment of 175,000 small businesses. U.S. strategy to promote gender equality in Afghanistan, including specific programs to accomplish that goal, is discussed in annual State Department reports on U.S. aid to women and girls.

Additional Challenges Likely After 2014

There are a number of possible scenarios for the post-2014 period, when there will be substantially fewer international forces in Afghanistan than the 82,000 that are there now. The gains made by women since 2001 have come during a time when there have been large numbers of international troops in Afghanistan—as many as 140,000 at the peak of international troop commitments in mid-2011. The troops not only aided security but also gave the force donors leverage over President Karzai and the Afghan government to establish institutional protections for women. Any of the possible post-2014 scenarios is thus likely to result in backsliding on women's rights in Afghanistan.

Relative Stability

One possible post-2014 outcome is that fewer international forces prove sufficient to prevent major Taliban gains. Current options suggest that the "residual presence" of international troops might include about 10,000 U.S. forces and about 5,000 partner forces.⁹ Most of the international forces in Afghanistan after 2014 are expected to train and mentor the 350,000-member Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF). If the security situation does not deteriorate, then most of the gains that Afghan women have made since 2001 would likely be preserved. However, the gradual backsliding that has occurred since 2008—a period when the Taliban made gains and international influence on Karzai began to wane—will likely continue to slowly erode some of these gains. And, many experts assess that the Taliban will make

⁷ A draft of this strategy document was provided to CRS by the State Department, April 21, 2011.

⁸ For prior years, see CRS Report RL30588, *Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy*, by Kenneth Katzman, in the section on aid to Afghanistan, year by year.

⁹ Thom Shanker, "NATO in Talks on Scale of Afghan Role After 2014 Deadline," *New York Times*, February 22, 2013.

at least modest gains in the rural areas, enabling the Taliban to enforce in those localities many of the restrictions on women's rights that were characteristic of the Taliban regime.¹⁰

Taliban Return

An alternate scenario is that security collapses after 2014 and Taliban rule over all of Afghanistan returns. Most experts consider this outcome unlikely, provided that some international forces remain after 2014. If it did come to pass, this scenario would likely represent a "worst-case scenario" for women's rights.

Some argue that the Taliban movement has moderated somewhat since it lost power in 2001. The leadership of the movement no longer opposes outright denial of female formal education and work outside the home, according to Afghan officials who have held informal negotiations with Taliban representatives over the past few years.¹¹ These Afghan officials add that Taliban leaders have recognized that Afghan society has evolved and modernized somewhat since 2001 and the movement is no longer committed to imposing Islamist policies as strictly as it did when it was in power. Others argue that the movement refuses to accept the Afghan constitution and that Taliban rule, should it return, would lead to a return of all the practices that took place when it governed Afghanistan.

Enhanced Influence of "Faction Leaders"

Whether the Taliban makes substantial or limited gains after 2014, many experts consider it likely that post-2014 Afghanistan will see a re-emergence of ethnic and geographic-based faction leaders who control armed followers.¹² The post-2001 international presence tried to establish in Afghanistan a relatively strong central government that possesses a monopoly of armed force. To do so, the international community concluded that the armed *mujahedin* groups that had fought the Soviet occupation in the 1980s, and then helped overthrow the Taliban, would have to be disarmed. After the fall of the Taliban, the U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) established a program called Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR), largely with funding from Japan, that demobilized about 59,000 fighters.

However, Afghan faction leaders have always questioned how Afghanistan will fare after the inevitable departure of U.S. and other international forces from Afghanistan and many have sought to preserve their future options by stockpiling weapons and rehiring some militiamen.¹³ The faction leaders thrive on the "*mujahedin* culture" – a respect for those who commanded fighters in the various civil wars in Afghanistan since 1979 and who have substantial influence. The faction leaders have large ethnic and regional constituencies and several of them have sought to revive disbanded militias to ensure security in their regions after international troops draw down.¹⁴

The faction leaders have a history of human rights abuses and arbitrary rule in their areas of influence. Women's groups fear that a revival of militia influence in post-2014 Afghanistan will accelerate the rolling back of many of their gains as national standards of law enforcement erode in favor of local practices. Some women fear a backlash from the faction leaders; women's activists have sought since 2001 to have faction leaders prosecuted for past abuses, but achieved almost no success. Women's groups failed to block passage of a 2007 law that gave many of these faction leaders amnesty for their past

¹⁰ Author conversations with experts on Afghanistan. 2012-2013.

¹¹ Author conversations with former Afghan officials. 2012-2013.

¹² Author conversations with Afghan officials and Afghanistan experts in Washington, D.C. 2012-2013.

¹³ For an analysis of the DDR program, see Christian Denny, *Disarmament, Demobilization and Rearmament?*, June 6, 2005, <http://www.jca.apc.org/~jann/Documents/Disarmament%20demobilization%20rearmament.pdf>.

¹⁴ Graham Bowley, "Afghan Warlord's Call to Arms Rattles Officials," *New York Times*, November 13, 2012.

actions, although the final law gave victims of such abuses some limited means for legal redress. One female former parliamentarian and women's rights activist, Malalai Joya, was outspoken in her calls for punishment of faction leaders who had committed abuses. She suffered threats and intimidation from various faction leaders for her criticism, including temporary suspension from parliamentary participation.

Of additional concern to women's rights groups is the fact that many of the faction leaders are major figures in the 2014 presidential election. A victory by the presidential ticket containing any of these leaders will give the faction leaders substantial influence after 2014. For example, a Tajik faction leader from western Afghanistan, Ismail Khan, is the first vice-president running mate of Sayyaf, who was mentioned above. Like Sayyaf, Khan is an Islamic conservative who has been widely accused of repressing women in Herat province, which is his area of primary influence.¹⁵ An Uzbek faction leader, Abdul Rashid Dostam, has been widely accused of human rights abuses in his northern redoubt; he is the first vice presidential candidate on the slate of Karzai adviser and former Finance Minister Ashraf Ghani. However, Dostam is a former Communist, not an Islamist, and his abuses have mainly been committed against political opponents, not against women specifically. A Hazara *mujahedin* commander, Mohammad Mohaqqiq, is the second vice presidential candidate on the slate of key opposition leader Dr. Abdullah. In the 2009 presidential election, Dr. Abdullah garnered enough votes to qualify for a runoff against the incumbent president Karzai.

Settlement with the Taliban

Another potential post-2014 outcome is a conflict-ending settlement with the Taliban. Were it to occur, that outcome is likely to color Afghan politics, future elections, the performance of the government along all its metrics, and the human rights and women's rights situation. Many in the international community, including some within the Obama Administration, initially were skeptical of the concept, asserting that a settlement could incorporate into the Afghan political system insurgent leaders who retain ties to Al Qaeda and might roll back freedoms instituted since 2001. The Administration later backed the reconciliations concept after Karzai repeatedly emphasized its potential benefits and his intent to move forward on it.

The minority communities in the north, women, intellectuals, and others have been particularly skeptical that their freedoms can be preserved if there is a political settlement with the Taliban. These groups fear that the Taliban could be given major ministries, seats in parliament, or even tacit control over territory as part of any deal with the Afghan government. Most insurgents are highly conservative Islamists who oppose the advancement of women that has occurred, and women have been a target of attacks by Taliban supporters, including attacks on girls' schools and athletic facilities. Then-Secretary Clinton said in India on July 20, 2011, that any settlement must not result in an undoing of "the progress that has been made [by women and ethnic minorities] in the past decade." To respond to those fears, Afghan and U.S. officials say that the outcome of a settlement would require the Taliban to drop at least some of its demands that (1) foreign troops leave Afghanistan; (2) a new "Islamic" constitution be adopted; and (3) Islamic law be imposed.

Conclusion

Under almost any conceivable outcome in post-2014 Afghanistan, it is likely that some of the gains made by women since 2001 will be eroded. Some of the potential scenarios threaten those gains more than others, but there is virtually no scenario in which women's rights improve from the level they are at now.

¹⁵ <http://www.msmagazine.com/mar03/rubin.asp>

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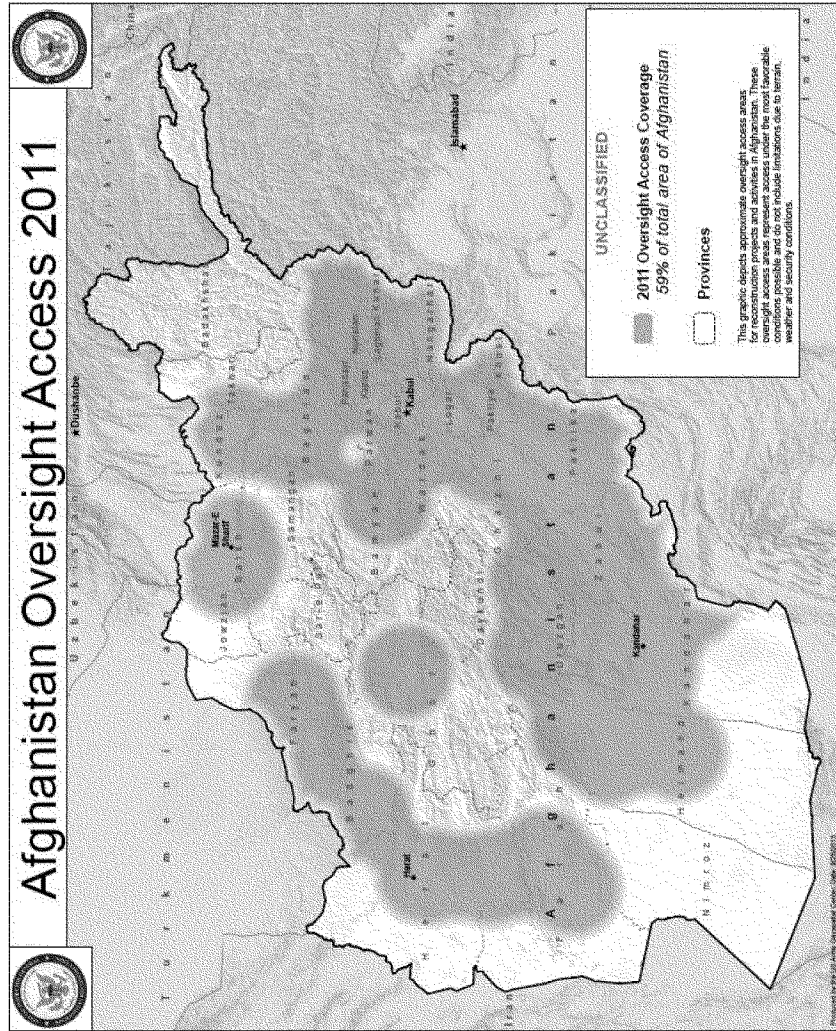
As a specialist with the Congressional Research Service, Dr. Katzman serves as a senior Middle East analyst for the U.S. Congress, with special emphasis on Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Persian Gulf states. He provides reports and briefings to Members of Congress and their staffs on U.S. policy on these countries and issues, and provides analysis of related legislative proposals. He has participated in several congressional delegations to the region at the Member and staff level, and given many official presentations and briefings at conferences and meetings throughout Europe, Asia, and the Islamic world. He has also written numerous articles in various outside publications, including a book entitled "The Warriors of Islam: Iran's Revolutionary Guard" which was the subject of his Ph.D. dissertation. During 1996 and again during July 2001 - March 2002, he was assigned to "close committee support" with the majority staff of the House Foreign Affairs Committee to work on Middle East issues, including hearings and legislation. On about a dozen occasions, he has testified before various Committees and Subcommittees on Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan.

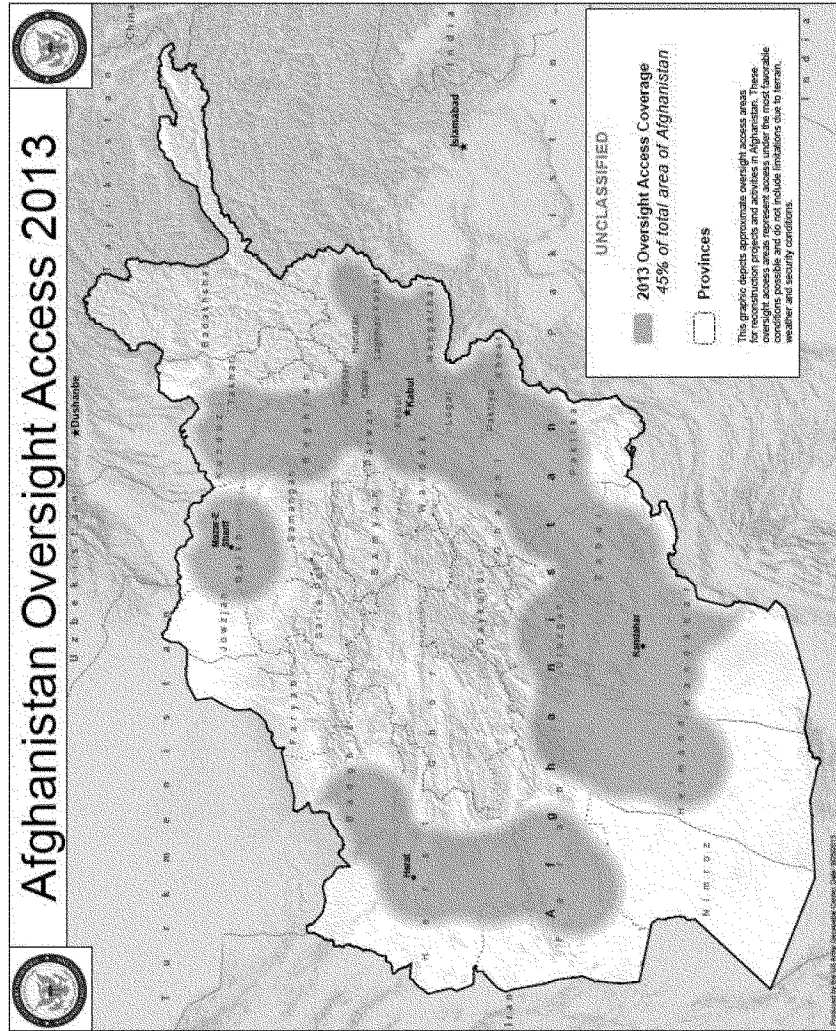
Dr. Katzman holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from New York University (1991). During May 1985-June 1989, Dr. Katzman was an analyst at the Central Intelligence Agency, where he prepared written reports for U.S. Middle East policymakers on leadership dynamics in Iran, Iraq, and the Persian Gulf states. Two years in the private defense consulting industry followed his tour at the CIA.

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

OCTOBER 29, 2013







QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING

OCTOBER 29, 2013

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MS. TSONGAS

Ms. TSONGAS. How do you intend to evaluate whether past, current, and future funds that were intended to support recruitment and retention of women in the Afghan National Security Forces were actually used for that purpose? Can you evaluate the impact of women-specific funding in cases where the funding was used for its intended purpose?

Mr. SOPKO. In August 2013, we initiated an audit of U.S. efforts to support Afghan women, with a focus on programs, projects, and initiatives the Department of Defense (DOD), Department of State, and USAID implemented in fiscal years 2011 through 2013. The objectives of the audit are to (1) identify U.S. government programs or initiatives to improve the rights and treatment of women in Afghanistan since fiscal year 2011; (2) assess the extent to which these programs and initiatives have been coordinated across different U.S. government agencies; and (3) identify challenges in addressing women's issues in Afghanistan and evaluate U.S. efforts to address these challenges. As part of this audit, we are examining U.S. efforts supporting recruitment and retention of women in the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Since 2009, we have tracked the amount of funding the United States has appropriated and disbursed to support the ANSF through the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF)—\$52.78 billion appropriated and \$43.54 billion disbursed as of August 31, 2013—and have been able to identify approximate funding levels for such areas as construction, operation and maintenance, fuel, and vehicle spare parts. However, we have found it difficult to determine what portion of the ASFF has been spent directly on recruitment and retention of women into the ANSF and whether funding is used for its intended purpose. As we note in our January 2014 Quarterly Report, while DOD has reported progress in recruiting women into the ANSF, women make up only 1 percent of the Afghan National Police and less than 1 percent of the Afghan National Army (SIGAR, Quarterly Report to Congress, January 30, 2014, pp. 97, 101.). Furthermore, it is methodologically difficult to link that increase directly to U.S. efforts and funding. Although past legislation has emphasized the recruitment and retention of women in the ANSF, and required the Secretaries of Defense and State to report on these efforts, Congress did not authorize or appropriate funding specifically for the recruitment and retention of women in the ANSF until fiscal year 2014. Specifically, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014 authorized no less than \$25 million in funding from the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund for the “recruitment, integration, retention, training and treatment” of women in the ANSF. In addition, the Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2014 stated that not less than \$25 million in appropriated funding for the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund shall be used for the “recruitment and retention” of women in the ANSF. To the extent possible, we will examine the Department of Defense's plans for using these funds during the course of our ongoing audit. In its regular Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, DOD provides details on its efforts to support women in the ANSF, including recruitment numbers, but the department does not include specific data on funding for these efforts. However, in response to a request for information submitted during our audit, DOD provided the following examples of funding specifically for women in the ANSF:

- The Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan (CSTC–A) provided \$100,000 to the Ministry of Defense (MOD) to be used for Women's Recruiting and Advertising.
- As part of the overall National Military Academy of Afghanistan (NMAA) facilities management budget, CSTC–A provided \$13,000 to complete the female cadet training field. As of October 1, 2013, the project had not been completed.
- CSTC–A provided \$4,400 of gym equipment for the NMAA female cadets, which was delivered on September 29, 2013. We are currently working with DOD to verify this information. We will continue to identify other efforts to support the recruitment and retention of women in the ANSF and associated funding, if possible, as part of our ongoing audit. We anticipate issuing a final report in summer 2014.

Ms. TSONGAS. In December 2011, President Obama issued the first-ever U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, (U.S. NAP) making a firm commitment to empowering women as equal partners in preventing conflict and building sustainable peace around the world in countries threatened and affected by war, violence and insecurity. The resulting executive order directed the U.S. Department of State, Department of Defense, USAID, and other agencies to develop and implement strategies to ensure women's participation in preventing conflict and keeping peace. In her October 18th speech to the UN Security Council, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Powers affirmed the principle that "women's participation in conflict prevention, mitigation, and recovery is vital to the maintenance of international security and peace. Not a sideshow, but vital;" and further stated that we must take "concrete steps so that women share fully in efforts to avoid and contain conflict, just as they inevitably share in the suffering when such efforts are poorly designed or when they fail."

Can you please describe to the Committee to what extent SIGAR applies a gender perspective, such as the collection of sex-disaggregated data or analysis of the unique impact of U.S. foreign policies and practices on Afghan women, in its oversight activities? Is there a way for you to measure whether Afghan women are fully and effectively participating in the peace building and political transition processes in Afghanistan?

Mr. SOPKO. As part of our ongoing audit of U.S. efforts in support of Afghan women, we are reviewing the Department of Defense's (DOD), Department of State's, and USAID's implementation plans developed in accordance with the United States National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (NAP), actions taken to implement those plans in Afghanistan, and the extent to which these agencies assess their progress in implementing the NAP. (The goal of the NAP is to empower half the world's population as equal partners in preventing conflict and building peace in countries threatened and affected by war, violence, and insecurity. The plan describes the course the United States Government will take to accelerate, institutionalize, and better coordinate our efforts to advance women's inclusion in peace negotiations, peace-building activities, and conflict prevention; to protect women from sexual and gender-based violence; and to ensure equal access to relief and recovery assistance, in areas of conflict and insecurity.). We are also assessing the extent to which DOD, State, and USAID sex-disaggregate their data and/or analyses of the impacts the identified programs, projects, and initiatives have had on Afghan women. Our assessment will include a high-level review of each agency's monitoring and evaluation efforts. Because this is a sector-wide audit, we do not intend to delve too deeply into each program, project, or initiative, though we might highlight specific efforts through case studies.

In addition to our audit of U.S. efforts in support of Afghan women, we are also auditing the U.S. government's efforts to assist and improve the Afghan education sector. This may identify programs focused on education of women and girls. As part of our quarterly reports, we collect data and reports from DOD, State, and USAID on programs and issues related to Afghan women, such as the Afghan government's progress in recruiting women into the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police and implementing of the Elimination of Violence Against Women law, as well as women's participation in the upcoming elections.